

# PLUCK AND LUCK

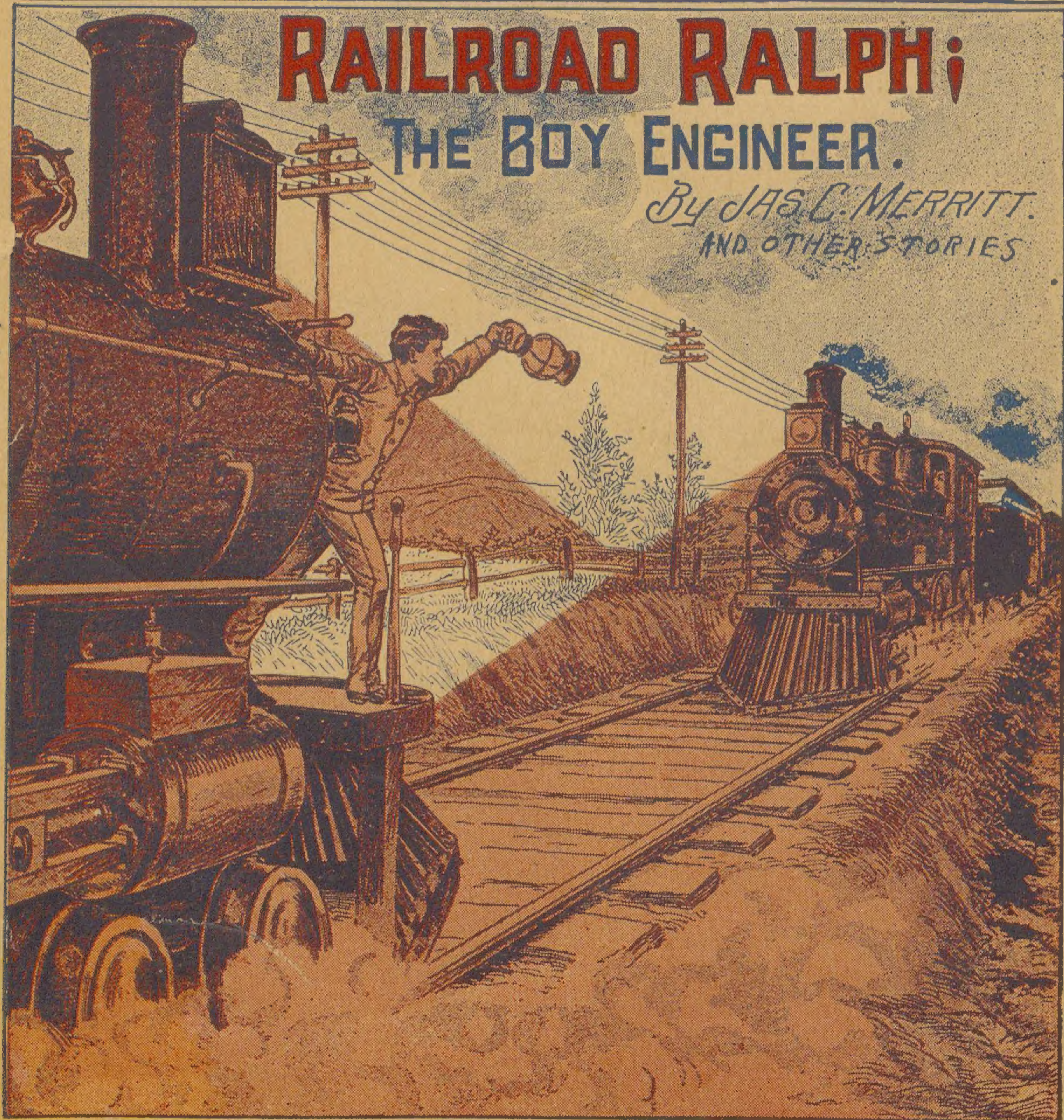
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He steps outside to the pilot, with a red lantern. Seizing hold of a bar with one hand, he waves the danger signal violently with the other, at the same time shouting to the engineer of the other train to stop







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## RAILROAD RALPH

### THE BOY ENGINEER

By JAS. C. MERRITT

#### CHAPTER I.—The Two Chums—Clif's Proposition.

"Ralph!"

"Well?"

"Come here."

"What for? I'm housing my engine."

"Don't do it yet."

"No? Are there any orders?"

"Yes."

"From the super?"

"Correct?"

"That settles it. So here goes on the steam, off come the brakes, and here I am. What's the matter?"

"Mr. Merritt will tell you that."

"Where is he?"

"In the telegraph office."

"Then here goes on the side track, bound for the telegraph office, pursuant to special order number sixteen hundred."

The young man called Ralph, who had looked up from his work when he heard his name called, and had approached the platform where the station agent stood, now made his way through the station until he came to the telegraph window, and nodding to the operator, said pleasantly:

"Will you tell Mr. Merritt that I am here, if he wants to see me?"

"Ah, Ralph, is that you?" said a voice from within. "Step right inside; I'll be free in a moment."

He was as good as his word, for Ralph had no sooner pushed open the wicket and entered the little office than Mr. Merritt said, drawing a chair toward his own:

"Sit down, Ralph. Never mind your working clothes; I am not ashamed of them, for I wore just such myself once."

Ralph sat down, and Mr. Merritt drew his chair up close to that occupied by the young engineer, and bending forward, said gravely:

"There is trouble ahead on the road, Ralph, and I want you to take the wildcat and investigate it."

"What is the nature of it, sir?"

"You have heard of Jack Friel?"

"The train-wrecker and outlaw? Often."

"He and his gang have been operating in this region lately, and from what I can learn, I fear that an attempt will be made to destroy the bridge over Swift river, and rob the passengers in the confusion."

"Wreck the bridge right out?"

"No, but disable it so that when a train goes across it will break down. The water is not deep at that point, you know, and it will be an easy matter to rob the cars and the passengers after the accident."

"They might break the bridge down, and when the train stopped, rush their gang aboard and get to work in lively style."

"Possibly."

"And you want me to run out and see if the bridge is all safe?"

"Yes; you can take your engine merely and go down if you think you can manage it. If it becomes necessary you can abandon it."

"Do you want me to go to-night?"

"I can't tell yet. I may want—"

At that moment the operator stepped out and said:

"A message has just come for you, Mr. Merritt, from the station agent at the switch just beyond Swift river."

"What does he say?"

"That it is believed Friel is in this city and that his gang have dispersed."

"That may be a blind. Come around again, Ralph, at nine o'clock. You'd better keep your fires up so that you can get steam on in a short time."

"I'll keep a small head on until I see you again."

"Very well. I can probably let you know when you come again what I intend to do."

"All right, sir. Good-evening."

Ralph Wright was an engineer on the Southeastern Railroad, which ran from a point in Northwestern Missouri, which we shall call Bradford for convenience, southeast to Pawnee, a distance of about three hundred miles. He did not run any particular train, but took out the extras and specials, known as "wildcats" by railroad men, and in that way had acquired the name of Wildcat Ralph, but was better known as Railroad Ralph, although it was not inappropriate upon other accounts, the young fellow being as fearless and as tough in a fight as the animal from which the extra trains received their name. Ralph was nineteen, strong and lithe, handsome and manly in bearing, courteous and winning in his manner, strong, brave and fearless, and a general favorite with all who knew him. Mr. Merritt was the general superintendent of the



road, and reposed great confidence in the young man, trusting him with many difficult missions, and confiding matters of the utmost importance to him, having rightly judged that the latter was entirely worthy of the trust reposed in him. When Ralph left the office he attended to his engine, and was about to walk up the track toward the street, when someone called him.

"Ralph!"

"Hello!" he answered, looking in the direction of the voice. He saw a young fellow, a friend of his, who was a clerk in the offices of the railroad company, and halting, he awaited the other's approach.

"Hallo, Clif, what's the matter?" he asked. "You look excited."

"Do I?" said the other, flushing. "Oh, I've been walking fast; I want to talk to you."

"What about?"

"Had your supper?"

"No."

"Then come with me to Bryce's. We can get a rattling steak there, the best in the city."

"You've switched me upon the right tracks this time, Clif, so get on the turn-table, face about and off we got, side and side."

Clifford Wayne had been an old school chum of Ralph's, and at that time the boys had been devotedly attached to one another, though of late years they had not seen so much of each other as formerly. Ralph was on the road a great deal, and often at night and during the day Clif was at work in the office, so that it was only occasionally that the boys saw each other nowadays. Clif was disposed to be somewhat wild, indulging in many practices which he might better have let alone, while Ralph was as steady as a clock, and though no preacher, was not altogether satisfied with the way his old friend and schoolmate was traveling, and frequently told him so. Clif was a high-spirited, independent sort of a fellow, and Ralph, not caring to have any fuss, had never said very much about his wild ways, though he had always declined, upon the plea of being too busy, when asked to go off on a lark with the young mob. They reached Bryce's chop-house in a short time, and, taking seats in a little curtained box, gave their orders. When the steaks, smoking hot and savory, were placed before them, Clif said:

"I'm going to have some hot brandy and water, Ralph; what's yours?"

"Coffee, if it's hot and strong?"

"Oh, nonsense, have something good; take a smash."

"I always avoid smashes in my business," replied Ralph with a laugh. "No, I always have run my engine on water, and I guess I'd better keep it up."

"You never do take a drink with me."

"Nor with anyone else, old man, so you're no worse off than the rest of my friends."

"Oh, well, suit yourself, you always were an odd stick."

When the waiter had finally left them, Clif said suddenly, pitching into his steak:

"Do you want to make a big pile of stamps, Ralph?"

"I'm agreeable."

"Then I'll tell you how to do it. You know

that this road and two or three others have been cutting rates like the dickens lately?"

"And cutting each other's throats, too. It's ruinous. I tell you a man can't afford to give you a quarter's worth for a nickel, and it doesn't pay to reduce rates so much."

"It runs the other fellows off the track, though."

"And takes away all your own profits."

"Oh, well, we won't discuss that part of the business. There will be a compromise made the first of next week, and then the old rates will prevail."

"The public don't know it yet."

"But I do, for I heard the whole business talked up between Merritt and our fellows, and the ducks of the other road. I had a good stand, and I just listened and heard every word. It's all settled, and the former state of things will be in vogue again after Tuesday next."

"But do you think——"

"Now, my plan is this: Suppose a fellow, knowing of this proposed change, were to buy up several thousands dollars' worth of tickets at the present rate, hold on to 'em and sell 'em again at an advance."

"He would realize heavily."

"Suppose he could get them for nothing, and sell 'em to the station agents at present prices, giving them the chance to make something, wouldn't he make still?"

"Yes, but——"

"Suppose he had ten thousand dollars' worth of these tickets, and should rush them all over the West at a considerable advance, or even at present rates, with the understanding that he was to get something additional from each of his customers?"

"There is a fortune in it, certainly; but I am afraid——"

"I know just where there is a box of these tickets to the value of ten thousand dollars, and I can lay my hand on 'em as easily as I can take up my knife. They are in the safe—the small one, not the big one—in the vault, and I've got the combination."

"Good Heavens, Clif, you don't——"

"I can enter the office at any time without exciting suspicion. I can take out these tickets, give 'em to you, as you run all over the road, let you distribute them in small lots to the men on the list which I shall give you. My vacation begins to-morrow, and I could go with you and help you without being missed."

"What? Make me a party to the thing?" cried Ralph, in consternation.

"Certainly; I always help my friends when I get hold of a good thing. It will be the making of both of us, and if we don't squeal there won't be the ghost of a chance of finding it out."

"I won't have a thing to do with it," said Ralph, emphatically, "and I advise you as a friend to let it alone."

As he said these words, a man in the next box, who with his ears pressed close to the partition, had heard every word that had passed, looked back and thought to himself.

"The pious young hypocrite. He'll spoil the whole business."



"But there's a good time for us in it," rejoined Clif.

"Are you aware that you are asking me to commit a crime?" answered Ralph, in icy tones.

"Nonsense! It ain't stealing to take from a railroad company. If you were a conductor now you'd talk different. I'll bet that you and the other engineers levy on them as it is."

"There's nothing more to be said," getting up from his seat. "You have made a mistake in me, Clif. You have got upon the wrong line entirely, and I advise you to switch off."

"I suppose you'll give the whole thing away now?"

"No one but an old friend would dare say that," answered Ralph, hotly.

"And you won't go into it?"

"No, and if you do you'll ruin your good name forever. You may make a heap of money now, but it will burn in your pocket and drag you down to ruin. Is it worth that?"

Ralph talked in the same strain for some time, and at last Clif said:

"Make your mind easy, Ralph, I've given the thing up. You're right, and it won't pay."

## CHAPTER II.—The Outlaw and the Clerk— The Robbery.

Shortly after that Ralph bade his friend good-night and started off for the station, Clif remaining behind.

"That's all very well," he said to himself, after Ralph had left. "I can't depend upon him, that's plain to be seen, but I'm going to make a raise for all that."

"And I'll help you," said a voice.

Clif turned quickly, and saw a well-dressed but evil-looking man standing close beside him. There was not light enough in the street for him to see the man's face clearly, or he would have observed a malicious look upon it, but the voice did not impress him favorably, and he said, with a slight start:

"What's that?"

"I say I'll help you."

"What about?"

"Making a raise."

"I don't understand."

"Ho, ho, you're fly, are you? About the tickets, you know. I'll help you to dispose of them."

"What tickets?" asked Clif, beginning to feel alarmed.

"Oh, you know what. You needn't be afraid of me, for I'm solid. I won't give the snap away, and if there's any trouble I can put the brassies on the wrong track, make 'em think there were burglars around."

"Who are you?"

"Never mind now. I know the whole business," and in a few words the man convinced Clif that such was the fact, adding quickly:

"You get the stuff out and I'll help you to scatter it. We'll go shares. I had the same sort of scheme on hand myself, but didn't hope to have such good luck as getting hold of an insider to help me work it."

"How do I know you won't rob me of the whole lot when I get them out?"

"You act square with us, and we'll do the same by you."

"Oh, you have associates, then?" said Clif, quickly.

"Only my brother. He and I work together always. We'll both swear to do the square thing. I've got lots of points I can give you."

Then the stranger mentioned several clever ways of disposing of the tickets quietly, which Clif had not thought of, and the young fellow saw at once that he was a master hand.

"You did wrong to tell that young fellow about it," he said, "but I don't know after all, because he is square, and if you tell him not to say anything about it, he won't. If he gives his word he'll keep it."

"That's Ralph every time. He must not know I have the stuff."

"Of course not; you can tell him you have thought better of the matter, and ask him to say nothing."

"He'll be as dumb as an oyster if I ask him to keep quiet."

"Oh, you can humbug him," said the other. "You're smarter than he is, and you'll be able to pull the wool over his eyes. I have known you for a long time, and I was sure from the start that you were game."

All this and more to the same purpose did the wily flatterer pour into Clif's ear, gradually worming himself into the young fellow's confidence as they walked along, and finally inviting him in to have a bottle of wine. Over the wine they talked and chatted, the stranger skillfully plying his comrade with wine, praising his cleverness, telling him how smart he was, picturing the wealth that both would soon enjoy, and adroitly spreading his net so that there should be no chance of escape. Clif became excited and soon his good intentions flew to the winds; all traces of better feeling which Ralph had awakened vanished like smoke, and he was thoroughly en rapport with his villainous comrade, and swore to enter, hand and glove, with him in the scheme to rob the company and make a fortune.

"I'll get it to-night," he said at length, "collar the plunder, and meet you in the morning."

"At six o'clock, daybreak, I'll be on hand with the buggy, and we'll streak it out on the road at once."

"All right; count on me."

Nine o'clock was striking from the spires of Brandford when Ralph entered the station and asked for Mr. Merritt.

"Ah, Ralph, on time as usual," said the superintendent. "Always up to time, I see."

"The rule of the road, sir," answered Ralph. "Many a life has been lost by the delay of a minute."

"Quite right, Ralph; there's nothing like punctuality. Not to flatter you, Ralph, you're the steadiest man on the whole line."

"Any news from up the road, sir?" asked Ralph, smiling.

"No, or at least nothing that calls for immediate action."

"Then you won't want the wildcat to-night?"

"No, not to-night, but I shall want you to have steam up shortly after five to-morrow."



"Very well, sir."

"Shall I have a caller sent to your house?"

"No, thanks; I'll have the thing upon my mind and will be sure to wake up. If there's nothing more I'll take a stroll and then turn in."

"Nothing more, Ralph. I'll be going up myself presently, and when you get through with your engine drop in and we'll go along together."

Half an hour later Ralph and the superintendent passed the offices, where a dim light was burning, and Mr. Merritt said:

"How would you like being in there, Ralph, in preference to running up and down the road?"

"I'd rather take the road—there's more freedom."

"There's a friend of yours in the office, but we're not altogether satisfied with him, and I could make a vacancy if you cared to take it."

"Do you mean Clif Wayne?"

"Yes."

"You'd better try him a little bit longer, sir, for I am sure he means well. I'll speak to him myself."

"If you recommended him, Ralph, that's enough, and I shall be glad to give him another chance."

"I wish you would, sir," said Ralph, as they passed by.

Had he known that at that very moment the young man in whose behalf he was speaking was hidden behind a safe in the office awaiting his time to rob the company, he might not have bestirred himself so actively, but suffered matters to their own course.

Eleven o'clock chimed full and clear from the church spires, and the young man behind the safe arose and looked carefully about him. Creeping to the window he peered out, taking care that he should not be seen. The guardian of the night passed at that moment and rapped sharply on the pavement.

"All's well," meant that rap, but what a mockery it was, it being anything but all well in the office at that moment. There were people in the street yet, and Clif knew there was still time enough, so creeping way from the window, he lay down upon a sofa in the secretary's room and waited. Twelve o'clock struck and found him fast asleep; one o'clock barely roused him, but when two o'clock sounded he was on his feet in an instant. He waited until the watchman had passed, and then, going to the safe, knelt down before it and began to work. He was nervous and excited, and could not work to the best advantage, so, arising, he went into the president's room, where he knew there was a decanter of fine old brandy, and helped himself to a couple of glasses. He broke open the president's desk, to make it appear as though burglars had entered, scattered the papers around, left a box of cigars on the table, lighting one and throwing it half smoked upon the carpet, overturned the decanter, and otherwise confused things, so as to make it appear as if half a dozen men had been there.

He made the same confusion in the other rooms, and by this time it was three o'clock, and he was well prepared for the desperate work he had on hand. It was the work of a few minutes to open the safe and take out the tin box

containing the tickets, which he put upon the floor beside him. Opening it, to see that its contents were all right, he shut and locked it, and then closed the safe, changing the combination in order to bother those that came to open it in the morning.

"That's all right," he muttered. "I'm fly, I am, and nobody will be the wiser. There's nothing like making a big stroke and have done with it. If I stole a hundred dollars I'd be jugged for it; but when a man makes a big haul he's called a financier, and gets his name in the papers."

Then Clif lay down upon another sofa, after fortifying himself with an additional drink and a smoke, scratched the door of the vault, as if an attempt had been made upon that, and then waited for the hour to arrive when he could leave. How the moments dragged now that he had that weight of guilt upon his soul, how the very striking of the clock seemed to accuse him.

"Thief—thief—thief!" it said, slowly and solemnly. Even the tread of the night watchman, as he passed upon his rounds, seemed to ring out upon the pavement the same words:

"Thief—thief—thief!"

The beating of his heart echoed the same refrain, the whistling of the wind outside repeated it again and again, the very walls seemed to shout it, and the air was full of the sound—

"Thief!"

Four o'clock had long struck, and Clif could stand it no longer, fearing to go mad if he remained alone another hour. He took the box from the floor, wrapped it up in a heavy sheet of paper, thrust it under his arm, and prepared to make his exit. As he reached the outer door, and was preparing to open it, he heard voices outside.

"We'd better not trust him, Jack," said one. "He might undertake to give us the slip."

"I'll keep my eye on him," said another voice, which Clif recognized as that of his tempter of the previous night. "Jack Friel knows how to fix these young fellows if they go back on him."

Jack Friel! It was the noted outlaw then with whom Clif had been in conference? There were more than two men outside, as he knew by the sound, and without a doubt they would rob him when he came out, and he would reap no benefit whatever from his crime.

"I'll outwit 'em," he muttered, and taking the tickets from the box, he made a bundle of them, and tucked them under his coat, carrying the empty box in his hand. Going to one of the side windows he raised it carefully, and putting his head out, whispered:

"I say, you are early, aren't you?"

"No, I said five o'clock just before I went away. Got the swag?"

"Yes, catch it and wait till I come down." Then tossing out the box, which he had stuffed with waste paper, he closed the window, and running down quickly, opened the door and slipped out. One of the men had discovered the deceit, however, and he cried out, hastening after the fugitive:

"He's cheated us! Catch him, boys! He mustn't escape!"

Ralph was just ready to start out, having



gotten up steam and sitting in the cab awaiting the signal, when he saw a figure come flying down the track, pursued by four villainous-looking men. It was Clif, and under his arm was a suspicious-looking bundle. In a moment he had leaped into the cab, and sinking down upon the seat, gasped out:

"I couldn't resist the temptation, Ralph. These men are of Jack Friel's gang, and would rob me. Save me and I will make restitution."

The throttle was thrown wide open, the lever shoved into place, and with a snort the engine bowled along the track, leaving the discomfited outlaws far behind, venting their impotent rage in curses and shaking their clenched fists at the fugitive.

### CHAPTER III.—A Race for Life.

"How did you come to do it, Clif?" asked Ralph, after they had gone about a mile.

"Well, I couldn't help myself somehow or other, and I gave way. I am sorry now, and I wish the thing was back in the office."

To do the young man justice, he was sincere for the moment, and really felt what he said, though there was no telling how soon he might turn around again, particularly if he got the unlucky package into his possession. Ralph had taken it from the bench where it had fallen when Clif entered the cab, and had put it away securely in a locker, where it now remained. Our hero was fully aware of the vacillating character of his friend, and was determined to restore the packet without letting it get into Clif's hands, and in a manner that would throw no suspicion upon the real thief, whom he had resolved to shield in order that he might have still another chance to mend his ways.

"We've got to make the bridge and the switch beyond it," he said, presently, "before Lewis comes down on his train. He will stop, I presume, for I have telegraphed him that I am coming."

"Lewis? That is the fellow that goes on those awful drunks occasionally, is it not?"

"Yes, and that is the only thing against him. He would be the best man on the road if it wasn't for that."

"I've seen him so drunk that he couldn't stand, and yet he was running his engine."

"There'll be an accident some day if they don't look out for him," replied Ralph, little realizing the prophetic meaning of his words.

It was still quite a little run to Swift river, and the two boys spent the time in lively conversation, Ralph never once alluding to the subject of the robbery, but striving to keep Clif in the best of spirits, succeeding so well that the latter soon recovered his wonted gayety and chatted away as if there were not the burden of sin at his heart which might even yet crush and ruin him. Fully two hours passed, when suddenly from around a curve, the bridge came in sight, apparently in sound condition.

"Hallo, it's there all right," said Ralph, joyfully. "I was afraid Jack Friel and his gang might have destroyed it."

"Jack Friel is in Brandford."

"Unless he left on one of the other roads.

Besides, he himself is not always where people think him, and some of his men might have attended to this job."

"What's that?"

"Smashing the bridge. It's all right, though, so here goes across, for I must make the switch before Lewis does, and I haven't much time to spare."

In another instant they had leaped upon the bridge, when Ralph felt a strange trembling beneath him, his face turning pale in the flash of an instant. A horrible thought crossed his mind and rendered him nearly incapable of action. The outlaws had tampered with the bridge after all, and it would fall beneath him! He would perish, and the coming train, under the guidance of Lewis, perhaps already in a state of beastly intoxication, would be hurled into the chasm and a hundred lives sacrificed. The thought was maddening, but only for an instant did the fearless lad waver. The others must be warned at all hazards, for the safety of many lives depended upon his getting across, and his own destruction meant theirs as well, for it was not unlikely that in an emergency like this the drunken engineer would be unfit for duty. Breathing a prayer for safety, Ralph seized the throttle, threw it wide open, and clapped on every ounce of steam.

Not a second had passed since he had first felt that trembling beneath him, although it seemed a very age. The engine fairly flew over the hills, but when the center of the bridge was reached Ralph felt it trembling more violently than ever. Two-thirds of the distance is passed, and the bridge actually sways and rocks beneath him, Clif feeling the motion, even unused as he is to the road.

"My God, Ralph, the bridge is falling!" he cries.

"Not yet!" answers Ralph, as he glances ahead of him.

Three-quarters of the way has been traversed, and Ralph glances quickly behind him, his eye fixed upon the rear trusses. He sees them shake and totter, sees a gap appear between the bridge and the bank, widening at every instant, feels the track giving way beneath him. The middle span has begun to sink, and with an icy chill at his heart, the boy looks ahead once more. With a leap and a snort the engine clears the bridge, and rushes along the solid track. Crack! Ralph hears the sound and darts a swift glance over his shoulder. The bridge is a total ruin, and lies at the bottom of the river, a yawning chasm stretching out over the spot which Ralph has just passed.

"Thank God!" mutters Ralph, fervently, as he reduces his speed somewhat.

Clif is pale from excitement, and as he realizes the terrible danger from which he has just escaped, falls senseless upon the bench. Ralph spins along the track in order to reach the switch, but now a new peril menaces him.

"Woo—oo—oo!"

The long-drawn shriek of a coming locomotive sounds upon the morning air. Ralph springs to his feet, puts his head out of the window, and looks along the track. The train for Brandford has passed the switch and is rushing down upon him at a frightful rate of speed. Higher



than any it has ever attained. Surely the engineer must be made to keep at that frantic pace, when he knows that the wildcat engine is approaching, and that there is but a single track for both to run upon.

"Heaven preserve me!" ejaculated Ralph. "With the broken bridge behind and this maniac in front, which chance have I? He must stop, or we will both be lost!"

He reverses as speedily as possible, and then, as his engine begins to retreat, he steps outside to the pilot with a red lantern. Seizing hold of a bar with one hand, he waves the danger signal violently with the other, at the same time shouting to the engineer of the other train to stop. As he clings there, desperately shouting at the top of his voice, and waving the red lantern to and fro, his clustering locks blown back from his classic forehead, his head bare, and every fiber glowing with the most intense excitement, he looked more than human, and one might easily fancy him to be one of the heroes of old come back to life. The other engine is pressing him hard, and still the engineer does not seem to notice him, but dashes on under full head, the axles fairly hissing with the heat imparted to them.

"My God! it is useless. We will both be lost!" murmurs the poor fellow, despairingly. "Come what may, I shall not perish. I have done all I can, and now is the time to look out for myself."

He suddenly remembers what Mr. Merritt has said about sacrificing his engine in case of necessity, and he at once resolves to save his own life, no matter what may happen to the passenger train. Quickly returning to the cab he shuts off steam, just enough to allow him to make the leap in safety, and then securing the precious packet, arouses Clif, and tells him what he must do. He glances back and sees the open gap less than a hundred feet away, while in front, at half that distance, comes the passenger train, the steam and smoke rushing out in huge volumes and the rails fairly quivering with the frightful ructions given to them.

"Now!" cries Ralph. "It is life or death! Not an instant is to be lost! Jump!"

Engineer Lewis is crazy with drink, and has not the least idea of what he is doing, where he is going, or that he is in any danger. Conductor Harris wonders that the train has passed the switch where Ralph's engine is still on the main track, and he begins to feel uneasy. The speed is something frightful, and should the two engines collide the loss of life would be terrible.

"What can be the matter?" he mutters to himself. "Is it possible that Ralph has not started? If so, why didn't I hear something about it?"

The feeling of anxiety increases, and finally the man goes out upon the front platform of one of the cars, and holding on by the guard, swings his body far out and glances ahead. The blood seems to freeze in his veins, and every nerve is paralyzed, every sense benumbed. He sees Ralph on his engine waving his danger signal frantically, while Lewis, paying no attention to it, dashes on at a most alarming rate of speed. He springs in, and seizing the bell cord, gives the signal to stop the train. No attention is

taken of it, the engine rushing madly onward to certain destruction. Again and again he pulls the cord, but with the same result. He rushes headlong through one car after another, swaying and rocking most fearfully, and at least reaches the tender, all out of breath. One quick glance shows him the situation in an instant. The fireman has attacked the bottle, and lies across a pile of coal, helplessly drunk. The engineer is upon his seat, singing and shouting like a madman, crazy with drink, and utterly unconscious of his danger.

Two strides bring the conductor into the engine besides the drunken wretch, who scarcely seems to see him. He rams in the throttle, puts the lever in the center and claps on all the brakes. He glances ahead and sees two figures leap from the wildcat engine just as she reaches the gap. Then, with a plunge, she goes over, there is a splash and a boom, and the wildcat engine is a wreck at the bottom of Swift river. The passenger train slows up, the brakes taking instant hold, and the engine comes to a dead halt, with the forward trucks on the very edge of the gap.

"Saved in the very nick!" cries our hero, and then, overcome by his emotions, falls senseless upon the stone abutments of the broken bridge.

#### CHAPTER IV.—The Boys Make A Discovery.

"Clif, are you hurt?"

"Yes, in the leg."

"Badly?"

"I can't walk very well."

"Here, I'll give you a lift."

Ralph helped his companion along a few yards, and they both sat down upon a large rock at the side of the road.

"I say Ralph," whispered Clif, presently, "have you got the tickets?"

"You bet."

"You won't say anything about me?"

"Of course not. Trust me for that."

A close grip sealed the bargain, and Clif felt safe, for he knew that Ralph would sooner die than break his oath.

"Let's be moving," he said, presently.

"Hold on! I want to hear what Merritt has to say. He may send me a message, for one of the conductors of the passenger train telegraphed to him."

After waiting about an hour, Ralph suddenly cried:

"Hallo, there's the boy coming now. He's got a message for me."

The boy soon approached, and Ralph called out:

"Have you got a message for me?"

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"Old Merritt says you're to stay around here till night and wait for word from him."

"All right."

"I say, Ralph," then said Clif, "let's go and get something to eat."

"Steam's up, Clif, and here we go bowling down the track for the supply station."

Ralph then assisted his friend to his feet, and



the two started off for the house which they had seen. It was further away than they had thought, as there were several hills to cross, and Clif had to stop and rest several times before they reached it. There was smoke coming from the chimney, and water had been lately splashed on the well curb, so that they knew there must be somebody about. The door was partly ajar, and pushing in open without further ceremony, Ralph entered, finding himself in a small kitchen, where an old woman was raking the fire.

"Good-morning."

The old woman turned, showing a face that indicated great craftiness and cunning, and returned the salutation.

"Can you give us some breakfast, granny?" asked Ralph.

"No. There ain't nothin' in the house."

"Oh, we don't want much."

"You won't get much. There ain't no meal, nor ham, nor taters, nor nothing. We're clean given out."

"How will that do towards finding supplies?"

The young fellow rang a silver dollar on the pine table, and Clif threw another alongside of it. The old hag, for such indeed she was, turned at the sound, examined the coins, felt of them, bit them, rang them on the table and said:

"What's them?"

"Them's money," returned Ralph, laughing.

"Sho! I thought money was made of paper, nasty, dirty, crumpled paper."

"Some of it is, granny; but this is better than that, for the rats can't chew it."

"Strangers here, be you?" asked the old woman.

"Yes. We have just come in on the train. The bridge was wrecked and we had to stop."

"Well, I ain't got much, for my son Jack ain't been home lately. He ginerally brings a lot of money, and the boys comes with him. You don't know my son Jack!"

"No."

"Perhaps it's as well that you don't," muttered the old woman, half to herself. "They's a good many as knows him what wishes they didn't."

Then she turned, and addressing the two boys, said:

"Sit down and rest yourselves, and I'll go down cellar and get ye suthin' ter eat."

"That's a queer old specimen," muttered Clif, when she had gone.

"Yes, and I don't alotgether like this place. Did you hear what she said to herself that time?"

"That there were some who knew her son that wished they did not."

There was a dingy-looking photograph in a dirty frame tacked to the wall at one side of the room which had attracted Clif's attention, and he called Ralph over to look at it. It represented a fairly handsome man, but one whom one would not like to trust very much; the face indicating a cunning, daring rogue.

"I don't like his looks," said Ralph, after a hasty glance.

"Do you know who it is?"

"Of course not."

"I do."

"What?"

"That is Jack Friel, the outlaw!"

"Good Lord! Then we will have to stow away those tickets!"

## CHAPTER V.—The Ruse—The Outlaws—How Dick Went to Work.

"Hadn't we better go now as it is?"

"No, for there's no certainty of Friel's coming here to-day."

"Where will you hide the package?"

"I have it! Down the well!"

They went out to the well, and Ralph drew up a pail of milk which had been let down into the water to keep cool. Then detaching the rope, he tied the bundle to it and let it down almost to the water on the shady side, so that it would not be noticed, fastening the upper end of the cord around a stone on the inside of the curb, and not on the outside, as it had been.

"That's all right," he said, when this had been done. "Now we'll take in the milk, so as to save the old woman from coming out, and then we're all right." Taking the pail in his hand, Ralph re-entered the door just as the old woman came up, and he said at once:

"I've brought the milk for you, granny, so as to save you the trouble."

"H'm, reckon ye meant to be sure o' gettin' it. Well, I'll have things ready pretty soon."

She did as she had promised, and before long the boys sat down to a smoking hot breakfast of bacon and potatoes and corn cakes, with good fresh milk to wash it down. By the time they had finished their breakfast it was well into the afternoon, and as it was quite warm out, they agreed to remain in the house until night. The old woman had no objection to their doing so, and she showed them into an inner room, where they laid down upon a couple of cots and were soon fast asleep. Ralph was awakened by the sound of voices, and going to the door noiselessly, he listened to the conversation.

"Don't you s'pose that's the same feller, Jack?" said one.

"Shouldn't be surprised, from what mother says."

"Ha! this must be the outlaw himself," thought Ralph. "We must get out of here."

"But she didn't see 'em have any bundle," said a third.

"That's what puzzled me, for they'd know too much to get rid of it."

"We must get it out of 'em then some way."

Quietly waking Clif, and cautioning him to make no noise, Ralph said in a whisper:

"We must get out of this."

"What's the matter?"

"Jack Friel and his gang have come while we were asleep. I'll bet the old woman drugged us, for we've been sleeping a terrible time."

"Are they there now?"

"Yes, in the next room."

"I'm going to put for it. I can go to Brandford and get the late train."

"Will you take the tickets?"

"No, no! I don't want to have anything more to do with them."



"I'll go with you," replied Ralph, quietly.

"Oh, well, that's all right then."

"Let's get out the window."

They opened it, and slipping out, made their way round to the front of the house, Ralph starting toward the well where the tickets were concealed. At that moment there was a flash of light from the door, and Friel appeared with several of his comrades.

"Hi! there they are!" he shouted. "Catch 'em, boys!"

Clif immediately made off, and Ralph, who had conceived a sudden idea at that moment, shouted:

"Put in lively, Clif, get the train and you're all right. Hang on to the stuff, whatever you do!"

Clif did put it as though his life depended upon it, and soon reached the road, scampered down it at full speed in the direction of the nearest station on one of the rival roads. Ralph followed him for a few steps in order to keep up the deception, for he had no idea of abandoning the precious bundle left in the well.

"Halt there!" shouted Friel.

Ralph ran a few paces, when a bullet came whizzing past his head.

"Hold on there, or I'll make a pepper-box of you!" growled the outlaw.

Ralph stopped, and when the man came up, said:

"What's the matter with you?"

"You know well enough."

"You're Jack Friel, ain't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, I was trying to stop those two fellows for you. They stole suthin' out o' your house, didn't they?"

"Yes. And you were trying to stop 'em?"

"You just bet. They're making for the train on the Short-Cut railroad."

"I believe you're lying. I think you're one of the fellows."

"Do you suppose I'd stop if I was?"

"Did they have anything with 'em?"

"The fellow called Clif had a small bundle under his arm, and the other one told him to be mighty careful of it, 'cause it was wuth lots of money."

"If I thought you weren't telling me the truth, I'd put a bullet down your throat."

"Oh, you can count on me, pard, every time. I'm solid, I am. I know better than to lie to Jack Friel."

"He's all right, Jack," said one of the men. "We can't waste no time on him. We must get that stuff to-night, or we're out o' pocket."

"We will get it, never fear."

"Then come back to the house and I'll tell you how it's going to be done."

"You just make tracks, sonny," said Friel to Ralph, "for I might change my mind about you."

"All right, old pard," and Ralph moved away slowly.

As soon as the party had re-entered the house, however, he stole quietly up under the window and heard all that was said.

"They'll get the 1:10 morning express on the Short-Cut," said one of the men.

"Yes. Nice name, that, for a road that has

to go fifteen miles around a mountain instead of cutting through."

"They've got little morn'n time to get there by running."

"Yes."

"Then, if we was to take the real short cut over the mountains, by the turnpike, we could get there ahead of 'em."

"Get there ahead of them?"

"At the bluffs what overhang the track."

"Well?"

"Three or four of us, posted on them bluffs, could roll a big rock down on the track, couldn't we?"

"Yes."

"And stop the train?"

"Yes."

"It's a good idea."

"So good that I told one of the boys as I came in to harness up the light market wagon, put in three or four bags of potatoes for a blind, and have it all ready for us."

"Good enough."

"Wagon's ready, Jack," said a man, entering from the rear door at this moment.

"All correct. Ned and Jim will sit beside me on the seat and Tom on the taters. We'll want as many as that."

"Easy."

"Get your shooters, boys, and be ready to start in five minutes."

Ralph did not wait to hear any more, but slipping around to the well, hastily drew up the packet of tickets and hid it in his clothes. He was unobserved, and then listening for an instant, crept rapidly to the rear of the house, where a swift horse stood harnessed to a light farmer's wagon or box-buggy. There were three or four sacks of potatoes in the bottom, and letting down the tail-board, he pulled one of them out and dropped it upon the ground. Dragging it a few yards away, he quickly untied the neck of it, and, catching it by the bottom, dumped the contents upon the ground. He did this at a spot where they would not be likely to attract attention right away, and then returning to the wagon, got in and put up the tail-board.

"There'll be one mighty queer bag of potatoes in this lot," he muttered, as he lay down in the bottom of the wagon and put his feet into the sack. He heard Friel calling from inside, and rapidly drawing the bag over him, he covered his head and lay well over to one side, pulling one of the bags close to him and partly covering him.

"They little think they are going to give me a free ride," he muttered; "but I intend to stop their little game and haul them in at the same time if I can."

He had just disposed himself nicely in the bottom, looking for all the world like a sack of garden produce, when Friel came out, accompanied by the three men who were to go with him. Friel sat in the middle of the seat to drive, one man being on either side of him and one on a bag of potatoes in the wagon, and off they started on their errand of villainy, Ralph chuckling to himself to think how nicely he would outwit them.



## CHAPTER VI.—Ralph Again On Time.

Over the rough road went the wagon at a good speed, the horse being a swift one indeed, and before they had gone half a mile Ralph felt as sore as though he had been run over by a whole train of cars. When they reached the mountain road it was better traveling in some way, but not so good in others. The road was smoother, and the wagon being provided with springs, did not jolt so much, but occasionally they would go down a steep hill, and then everything in the end of the wagon would come piling down upon Ralph, making him feel particularly uncomfortable. Occasionally, too, the wheels would strike a stone, and Ralph would receive a bounce which would cause him to grunt in spite of himself.

On and on they went over the mountain road, Ralph being sore in every part of his body, but determined to see the thing out, come what would. The night was quite dark, the sky being heavily overcast, although the moon would occasionally peer forth from the thick banks of clouds for a moment, adding thereby to the wildness of the scene. The wind was fresh, and sounds would be heard to a great distance, as Ralph presently found out. He was listening to the talk of the outlaws, learning many facts of great importance concerning them, when suddenly he heard a long-drawn whistle. Whoo-oo-oo!

"There she comes!" said Tom. "We'll be late!"

"You're off!" said Friel. "She's a long way back yet. Seven or eight miles at least."

"How's that?"

"'Cause if she were any nearer you could see her. There's quite a stretch of track in sight from here."

Whoo-oo!

"She's only a little morn'n half around," remarked Ned. "I can see the light she makes on the sky."

"Better start the nag up a bit, hadn't you, Jack?" asked Jim.

Whack! The whip cut the animal's flank sharply, and away he spun over the road, past rock and tree, by hedge and thicket, each succeeding object seeming to rush by like lightning. They were now on a steep down grade, and the men were obliged to hold on to the seat with both hands to prevent themselves from being thrown out. The descent was ended at last, and the horse whisked along the level for a mile or so, when Friel suddenly checked his speed and turned into a by-path, at a point where the fence had been broken down. After going a short distance, Friel stopped the horse, and dismounting, led him into a thicket, where he hitched him to a tree, and then called upon his comrades to follow. On the line of the Short-Cut railroad, just after it had rounded the mountain, was a high bluff overhanging the track, from which a view of the neighboring country for miles around could be seen. This bluff was not far off now, Friel being so well acquainted with the country as to be able to drive to it at once with no trouble, and thither the four ruffians made their way. Whoo-oo-oo!

"Fifteen minutes before she passes," said Friel,

taking a huge gold watch, suspended from the end of three feet of heavy gilt chain, out of his pocket, and looking at it by the light of a dark lantern.

"She's due below there at 1:45," remarked Jim.

"And here at 1:40." Well, we ain't got but ten minutes after all; but that's enough."

The men disappeared, and after waiting a reasonable time, Ralph crawled out of the sack and looked around him. No one was in sight, and he dropped upon the ground, shook himself, stretched his legs, and took the path to the bluff. Before doing so, however, he unhitched the horse from the wagon, and leading him back to the road, gave him a sharp cut in the ribs, which started him off at a lively rate.

"That settles you," he remarked, with a quiet laugh. "My friends will have to walk back, I guess, if they get out of this scrape at all."

He might have taken the horse and got away, to be sure, but there were several good reasons for his not doing so. In the first place he was not the boy to see human life endangered and not try to prevent it, and his first duty was to outwit the villains and save the train from destruction. Secondly, he would not be able to reach the foot of the bluffs and station, where there would be probably someone in waiting, in time, for it was at least a couple of miles down and along the track, and even at this moment he could hear the whistle of the train. He must hasten or he would be too late, and with a silent prayer for the safety of the threatened train, he hurried forward and soon reached the bluff. On the outer edge were gathered the four villains, hard at work pushing a boulder toward the brink, Friel giving directions and working at the same time. Just back from the ledge of the bluff where the train wreckers were stationed there arose a steep bank, not very high indeed, but quite precipitous, from which one could overlook the actions of the men, and see the train below as well. Toward this Ralph made his way cautiously, having to take a detour in order to escape observation. He could hear the roar of the coming train, and knew that he had but a few minutes in which to act. Ralph hardly knew what he had best do, but trusting to good fortune, he hastened forward, and reached the little ledge overhanging the outlaws' position just as the train came in sight around the curve.

"Give her another shove," said Friel, "and she'll be at the edge ready to drop at the right moment."

Down the track came the train, the headlight casting a long track of light ahead, the sparks flying up and mingling with the thick clouds of smoke, and the light from the windows making the whole look like some huge monster with one huge eye and numberless glittering scales. On the rock above Ralph is tugging away at an overhanging boulder, which a little strength, well exerted, will loosen. It is poised directly above the ruffians, and woe to them if it fails. Just below him are Friel and his gang, exerting themselves to the utmost, and with every chance of success, for they have pushed the boulder nearly to the edge, and one more effort will send it over. A hundred lives depend upon one moment's events. A hundred lives depend upon the



strength of a single boy. It proves sufficient, for as Friel and his cut-throats are about to make their last effort, Ralph succeeds in pushing the rock from the edge of the bank. It falls with a sickening thud right into the midst of this group, their own efforts are interrupted, and the train sweeps by in safety!

## CHAPTER VII.—A Race for Life—Captured— An Alarming Proposition.

Crash! The huge boulder fell right amongst the villains, and put a most summary stop to their actions. It crashed in Tom's skull and ground one side of him to a jelly, though he suffered but little, as the first blow killed him almost instantly. It rolled over upon Jim's legs and then broke his back, putting him out of misery in an instant. One huge fragment of it struck Ned on the shoulder and knocked him senseless, not killing him, indeed, but putting him for the moment in an utterly useless condition. Friel was thrown down, but not badly hurt, and in a twinkling he was upon his feet and tearing about him like a wild beast. Ralph was just disappearing behind the bank, but quick as a flash the outlaw was after the daring lad, revolver in hand.

Bang! Bang! It was no toy weapon that the outlaw carried, and the reports rang out upon the air with startling distinctness, awakening the echoes far and wide. One bullet whizzed over Ralph's head, while the other passed through the skirt or his short coat as it fluttered in the mind.

"Stop there, you young whelp!" yelled Friel. "Stop or I'll riddle you so you won't hold a pint of water!"

Ralph was perfectly satisfied of the truth of the man's words, and without stopping to answer, which would give Friel an idea of his position, he plunged ahead at full speed and soon reached the gap in the fence. Bang! The bullet came dangerously near, for Friel was a good shot and had a pretty clear notion of where Ralph was. Ralph was uninjured, as I have said, although there was little enough room to spare between his ear and the bullet, and he felt more than ever the need of getting out of range of that loud-voiced weapon. As he struck the road he heard a sudden sound which inspired him with the wildest hope. It was the neigh of a horse.

"Come here, Blazer!" he called at a venture.

The horse neighed again, and trotting gently up to him, halted. The sagacious animal had returned, after darting down the road for some distance, upon Ralph's giving him that cut evidently knowing that his master would want him again.

"Steady, Blazer, old boy!" said Ralph, recognizing the animal at a glance, and then without further ado he leaped upon his back, clapped heels to his side, and clinging tightly to the animal's mane, went spinning down the road with the speed of the wind.

Friel reached the gap just in time to see the horse go bounding off, and he swore most ter-

ribly. He whistled to the horse to come back, but Blazer paid no attention to this and kept on at the same rattling pace as before.

"Stop, I say," roared Friel. "I'll shoot if you don't!"

"Shoot away!" answered Ralph. "I'm not afraid! You can't hit anything!"

Better not be too sure of your triumph, Ralph, for you are far from being out of the woods yet, as the saying goes. Bang! The distance was too great to have the bullet take effect, but at that instant the horse stumbled and nearly threw Ralph from his back. He kept on, but he limped badly now, and Ralph felt that it would be cruelty to urge him any further, and he was preparing to dismount when a newcomer appeared. This was Ned, who having recovered from his injuries in a measure, and hearing the report of firearms, suspected that Friel was in pursuit of the person who had interrupted them, and he at once took a short cut in order to head him off. He descended a narrow path leading from the cliff to the road below, and came out at a point of intersection just as Ralph went dashing ahead. His revolver was in his hands upon the instant, and blazing away, he struck the horse in the leg and brought him to a sudden standstill. Ralph was thrown, but not as violently as he would have been had he been entirely in the saddle, having already started to dismount. He was upon his feet almost instantly, but was met by Ned with a loaded revolver in his hand.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" he said. "You've been helpin' us some more, I s'pose, jist as you did back to the farm-house."

The only reply that Ralph made was to rush with all his might against Ned before the latter could fire, a movement which sent the ruffian sprawling and caused him to drop his weapon. This Ralph quickly picked up, and as Friel came rushing down upon him, turned quickly and fired. Bang! Bang!

"Where the deuce did you get that pop?" asked Friel, who had been hit, though not dangerously, his own arm having been hurt in consequence.

"It's mine," said Ned. "I dropped it. Got another, though."

"There he goes toward the station. We must collar him before he gets there."

"There ain't nobody about now, and he can't get in."

"I don't know about that."

By this time there was quite a considerable moonlight, the clouds having greatly broken away since the first arrival of the outlaws, and Ralph could be seen most distinctly, as he ran down the track towards the little station, now about half a mile distant. Friel fired half a dozen shots in rapid succession, loading as he ran, but Ralph, apprehending that would do this, did not keep a straight course, but jumped every now and then from side to side, which greatly disconcerted the outlaw, and caused him to give utterance to the most blood-curdling oaths. Bang! It was Ralph's turn onw, and he sent a bullet through Friel's left ear, which carried away a considerable portion of that useful organ, and made its owner swear louder and harder than before. Bang! Another shot from Ralph, almost the last one he has, whistles



so uncomfortably close to Jack Friel's head that he drops to the ground and cries to Ned:

"Head the young imp off if you can, Ned. He's the worst customer I ever tackled!"

Bang! Ned's shot fell short, for Ralph was speeding on now faster than ever. But Friel was a swifter runner than Ned, and he soon began to gain on the fugitive. By the time he had got in range again, however, Ralph had reached the shelter of the little station, dodging behind the corner just as Friel's bullet whizzed by. Ralph had just one bullet remaining, and he determined to make this tell, there being nothing to do but fight for it now, as the station men had departed, the place was locked up, and there was nowhere to secrete oneself. He moved cautiously around the house and, peering out behind a water-pipe saw Friel just disappearing around the other side. Quickly changing his own position, he crept forward so as to intercept the man when he should turn the next corner. He was in the shadow, while Friel was in the light, and dropping to his knees in order to get a better aim, he waited the man's approach with considerable anxiety. Suddenly he heard a noise behind, and turning quickly, he beheld a man almost upon him. He fired at once, but his aim was poor, and in an instant the fellow had grappled with him and tried to throw him down. The man was Ned, whom Ralph had left entirely out of his calculations, not supposing him to be anywhere about. He struggled to get free, but the man held on tenaciously, at the same time shouting to Friel to come up and help secure the desperate young fellow. Friel rushed in immediately, and poor Ralph was thrown down and disarmed, the outlaw taking his belt to tie his hands behind his back.

"So it's you, is it?" he said. "I believe you were lying to me all the time down there at the house, and that you are one of the young fellows we are after."

"I cannot help what you believe," answered Ralph, coolly.

"Let's take him back to the house, Ned," said Friel; "but stop; first of all, let's search him."

"Search me," thought Ralph; "then they will discover everything."

## CHAPTER VIII.—A Dash for Freedom.

"All right," said Ned. "Search him it is!"

Ralph had other plans, however, and bound as he was, he suddenly darted out of the grasp of the outlaw, and went at full speed down the road, having already left the little station. Friel uttered an exclamation of surprise at this most sudden and unexpected movement upon the part of the young fellow, and quickly drawing his revolver, took a hasty aim at the flying figure, and pulled the trigger. Snap! The weapon had been emptied during that exciting chase for life, and the man had neglected to reload it. In doing this now, although he ran at full speed, he lost time, and when he at last fired Ralph had just darted down a turn in the road.

Luckily his legs were in no wise impeded, and as he was able to swing his shoulders as he ran,

he made about as good time as though his arms had been free. As far as running went he was all right, of course, but when it came to defending himself, the fact of his arms being tied would be a great hindrance to him, and might result in his ultimate capture. Ralph was obliged to keep upon the track, as in the wood he could not make such good progress, his arms being secured, though otherwise he would have plunged into their shadowy recesses at once. Down the track he went, therefore, leaping nimbly from tie to tie, avoiding obstacles and keeping his eye fixed upon the road ahead of him, not daring to turn his head for fear of striking something and throwing himself down. When Friel catches sight of him again he is beyond reach of a pistol-shot, but he fires, nevertheless, thinking to frighten him perhaps. Forgetting his former caution, Ralph turns his head to see if there is any chance of the bullet hitting him. At that moment he strikes his foot against a projecting spike, and falls heavily upon the track, his head hitting the rail and making him senseless. When he recovered it was with a feeling of peril at his head, and he turned his head and looked about him. He is still lying upon the track, his hands tied behind him, his clothing disordered, and his matted hair falling in a damp mass upon his pale forehead. There is no one in sight, and it is still dark, though there are signs of the dawn now in the eastern sky, and the sounds which are usually heard at the coming of day indicate that the busy world is again awakening.

Ralph tries to rise, but the effort is too much for him, and he falls again upon the track, the dull pain which he feels at his head increasing, while the sense of terror, vague and undefined though it was, seems to grow upon him. He cannot account for it, as there is no one around, and he is perfectly free to go where he will, except that his hands are bound as before, which prevents his helping himself or warding off an attack. He can walk at all events, he thinks, and he essays once more to get upon his feet. Hark! What sound is that which suddenly arouses again all the terror within him and blanches his cheek with the hue of death? The shriek of an approaching engine!

The morning train is due, and even at this instant is rounding the curve and sweeping down upon him with irresistible force. Then the instinct of self-preservation, common in us all, from the highest to the lowest, animates him, and he resolves to live at all hazards. With the very agony of despair he throws himself forward and rolls over upon the ground, a prayer for help rising to his lips. Then there is a rush and a roar, a shriek and a snort, a cloud of smoke and cinders, a gust of wind like a tornado, and the train has passed, leaving Ralph lying just outside the rail, unhurt, though his escape has been compassed as if by a miracle.

"Thank Heaven for that!" murmurs Ralph, as he raises upon one elbow and gazes at the vanishing train. "That was a narrow squeeze, but an inch of a miss is as good as a mile, and I am as well satisfied as though it hadn't been so close."

The efforts he had made seemed to strengthen rather than exhaust him, and he did not feel the



reaction which usually follows moments of great excitement, but, on the contrary, he seemed nerved to increased effort. He arose with no trouble, and finding by one trial that the belt about his arms had been considerably loosened in his recent struggle, he summoned all his strength and snapped it asunder as though it had been mere pack-thread. Upon the instant he thrust his hands deep into his pockets in search of the precious packet for which he had already risked so much. Horror! It had been taken from him while he lay helpless and unconscious upon the track. A thorough search failed to reveal its presence, either upon his person or anywhere about, on the track or near it, and at last the conviction forced itself upon him that it had been stolen, and that after all his labor had been in vain.

"Never mind," he said, fiercely, "I will succeed yet, in spite of all obstacles. I have set out to recover this property, and I shall succeed!"

It was getting quite light now, and as Ralph walked along in the direction of the town he saw two or three persons approaching, to whom he determined to give information concerning the whereabouts of Friel and his men, in order that they might be apprehended. When they came up to him, however, he discovered that Friel himself was among them, although he had not at first discovered him. The outlaws themselves seemed to be endeavoring to escape from some danger now, for they hurried along, scarcely seeming to notice Ralph, until Friel whispered something to one of them, when the lad was instantly seized, though not bound, and hurried along with the others. Ralph presently learned that the authorities had in some manner got wind of the presence of the gang, and that at this moment a large force was in pursuit of them.

"Clif has done his duty after all," thought Ralph, "and the telegraph has been doing some lively work this morning."

It had, indeed, and livelier than Ralph imagined even, for at that very moment when the party of outlaws was hurrying forward towards the little station where they expected to seize a couple of hand-cars and make their escape upon them, a second party was waiting for them, ready to pounce upon him as soon as they made their appearance.

There was, indeed, a confused murmur coming from the direction of the town, and in another moment a large party was seen approaching around the curve. Friel and his men, with Ralph in their midst, dashed forward and reached the station, but at that moment the ambushed officers sprang out, and the evil-doers found themselves caught between two fires. A struggle took place upon the instant—pistols cracking, men shouting, knives gleaming, clubs resounding, and a perfect din ensuing. In the midst of all, the leader of the gang escaped with two or three of his best men, but the rest, including Ned, were captured, and poor Ralph along with them, and notwithstanding his protestations of innocence, he was handcuffed to Ned and hustled off to the town jail, where Ned and the rest swore that he was one of them, and had planned the robbery and destruction of the midnight express.

Ralph was remanded with the rest by the magistrate before whom they came up for trial. Ralph

tried to tell him his troubles, but he was not listened to. Mr. Merritt, who came to his cell later on, told Ralph that circumstances were against him. But Ralph would not peach on Clif, although he did say to Mr. Merritt that he would change his mind when the truth came out. Ralph was kept in a separate cell, and toward the close of day a muffled figure came into the cell and bade Ralph follow him. He did so, and they passed the guards, who seemed to be in a deep sleep, and soon reached the outer air. Then our hero recognized his rescuer as Clif. Clif told him money could do everything towards getting a prisoner out of jail. As soon as they were on the street Clif asked Ralph what he was going to do next.

"Find Jack Friel and make him disgorge."

In the meantime Jack Friel, who had escaped capture, came across one of his associates named Joe Blunt, and they had a plan in mind to wreck the train containing officers who were on Jack's track, and also plunder the train. They had laid a heavy sleeper across the rails in a cut. But just as they finished their dastardly work Ralph and Clif came across the obstruction. They tried to remove the sleeper, but it was too much for them. The train came and the wreck that followed was indescribable. To add to the horror of the scene, the wreck caught fire. A young girl was in one of the cars, and Ralph rescued her. She told Ralph her name was Jennie Everett, and her father was a banker in Brandford. Ralph now left her and returned to help in the work of rescue. Pretty soon he saw the girl he had rescued struggling in a man's grasp, and saw it was Jack Friel, the outlaw. As soon as he saw Ralph coming he left the girl and disappeared in a tunnel in the cut. Ralph followed him and was set upon by Friel's accomplice, who with Friel's help made Ralph prisoner and bound and gagged him, leaving him shortly after. The girl Jennie had followed and soon came upon Ralph and set him free. Together they left the tunnel, and a trail coming along and the engineer seeing Ralph and the girl, stopped and took them aboard. Learning who Ralph was, the engineer told him he was suspected of knifing a man in a house he had entered after he broke jail. Ralph was astonished, and said he knew nothing about it. Shortly the train stopped and Ralph left the engine and sought shelter in a deserted hut. After a good sleep he returned to Brandford. He was a hunted man, and kept out of the way of all officers. Seeing a train going out he boarded it and took a seat. Soon he thought he would go into the smoking car, and as he was crossing the car platform a man tapped him upon the shoulder. Ralph recognized him as Ned, one of Friel's gang. Just then the train entered a tunnel. Ralph turned on the man.

## CHAPTER IX.—The End of the Struggle—Caught.

"Now, you villain!" cried Ralph, "if you don't surrender I will throw you off. There is no use in struggling, for I've got you fast. Help there, help, I say!"

"Curse you!" hissed the outlaw. "You will not hear in all this rattle and confusion. Say your prayers quick, for I am going to kill you!"



Then he squirmed about, and partly raising himself, threw Ralph against the hand rail, one foot hanging over the lower step, his body just resting upon the upper one. Ralph saw that it would be all up with him in a moment if he did not do something, and yet, so thick was the darkness that he could see nothing, and could only guess his position. Drawing up the overhanging foot, he threw himself forward and clutched wildly at the air with both hands, trusting to blind-luck to aid him in this strait. Chance favored him, his grasp encircling the villain's throat, upon which he fastened his fingers most tenaciously. Ralph had a good hold, or would have had if the struggle had been upon firm ground, but, owing to the violent swaying of the cars, his grip was presently loosened, and he felt himself forced backwards by the efforts of his desperate foe. The latter, having released his throat from the boy's grasp, now drew up his knees and plunged forward with all his force.

Ralph felt himself going, but as he swayed to one side, threw out his hand and convulsively clutched the hand-rail. At the next moment he was nearly wrenched from his place, and then a body rushed by him, the sound of a dull thud seeming to follow, though Ralph was by no means certain of this. Strengthened by despair, he clutched at the guard-rail with his disengaged hand, and fortunately succeeded in grasping it. Ned had disappeared, but whether he had retired to await another opportunity to carry out his base designs, or been hurled from the swift-moving train and been killed, Ralph could not, of course, determine.

The train was about stopping, and Ralph, arranging his disordered clothes and putting on his hat, which he found jammed up into a corner, waited a moment and then leaped lightly to the ground on the side opposite of the platform. The town at which he had stopped was a long distance from Crosstown, where he expected to recover the stolen property; but as nothing could be done, in any probability, until the morning, he determined to stay overnight, and then go down and get possession of the packet if possible.

He walked into the first clothing store he saw. As he went into the shop he saw the dealer talking to two newcomers, and heard him say:

"I'll bet a dollar that's the man you are after. If you take him in, remember that I told you, and that I am entitled to my share of the reward."

Ralph flushed, but going straight up to the two men, he said:

"Are you two gentlemen special detectives?"

"No—only town constables."

"Have you a warrant for the arrest of one Ralph Wright, alleged to have been one of the Southeastern Railway robbers?"

"No, we haven't; but we expect it shortly."

Ralph began to move toward the door, when one of the officers held up his hand and said quietly:

"Hold on, my lad. I don't intend to stop you, for I know you, and am convinced of your innocence. I want to say something to this fellow, though, that you ought to hear."

Ralph paused, and then the officer, turning to the shop-keeper, said:

"You pitiable sneak, aren't you ashamed of yourself? You take this lad's money, and then you betray him. If you thought he was a villain, why didn't you refuse to deal with him, and then, after he was well out of your shop, inform upon him?"

"I can't refuse a customer, you know, and I want the reward."

"You'll get it in the next world," retorted the other, "and a mighty hot one it will be, too."

At this Ralph and the other constable laughed, and the first continued:

"This young fellow saved a child of mine from a frightful death during the railway smash-up the other night, and do you think that I shall ever forget it? Never! Boy, there's my hand. I know you are innocent, but I would advise you to leave this place as soon as possible."

Thanking the kind-hearted fellow for his consideration, Ralph hurried away, and was soon beyond the limits of the town, and county as well, as he saw by the guide-posts, and then, finding a farm-house, he went in and asked for a meal and a place to sleep, as he was pretty well tired out by this time. When he had dispatched a good dinner, he threw himself upon a comfortable bed, intending to sleep for two or three hours and then go down to Crosstown; but to his surprise, when he did awake, he found that it was morning, and that he had been asleep all night. There was no help for it, of course, and as he felt greatly refreshed, our hero did not complain, but ate a hearty breakfast, and then took the first train for Crosstown, where he arrived in the middle of the forenoon. He went at once to the express office where his friend was located, and finding him disengaged, said:

"Got all that stuff in yet, Harry?"

"Yes, and I was just getting it ready to send down to Brandford. I've made it up in one bundle. Do you want to take it?"

"Yes; what are the charges?"

"Five and a half without the odd cents."

When Ralph got the bundle he tore it open, and soon convinced himself that the whole of the stolen property had been returned, and then left, after tying it again. He little thought he had been betrayed, and by one whom he would never have suspected, and that at that moment his enemies were already on his track; but such was the case, however, and Friel at that moment had in his possession a letter which told him just how he could get word, not only to the precious packet, but of Ralph as well. The robber had hurried down to Crosstown, which he reached just behind Ralph, so at this moment he was right outside the express office, concealed behind his light wagon, awaiting Ralph's appearance. As the lad came out, utterly unsuspecting of evil, his heart light and his pulse beating joyously, two men suddenly sprang upon him, the packet was torn from his grasp, and he himself thrown into the cart, gagged and blindfolded. In a moment the two men had jumped in, and were rattling down the road at a fearful pace, while helpless in the bottom of the car lay poor Ralph, once more a prisoner in the hands of Jack Friel, the outlaw.



## CHAPTER X.—Mother Meg's Interference.

"Now, my friend, I've got you once more, and this time I intend to keep hold of you. The plunder is all right, too."

"Read that poster and tell me what you think of it."

So saying, Ralph handed the man a bill he had picked up in the express office, watching him carefully as he read it. The bill was the notice, issued by Mr. Merritt at Ralph's suggestion, offering a reward for the stolen tickets, and warning any one from attempting to negotiate them. It went on further to state that new tickets had been issued, and that none of the old ones would be taken unless officially stamped, and that any person presenting any tickets which there was reason to believe had been stolen would be liable to arrest.

"Confound it!" muttered Friel. "Whose notion was this?"

"Mine. How do you like it?"

"But you are proscribed. You daren't show your face to Merritt or any of the railway officials."

"There you are wrong, for I have seen Merritt, and it was at my suggestion that this step was taken."

"You are a smart lad, but I'll outwit you for all that," laughed Friel. "I'll have every bit of this stuff held and scattered broadcast before to-night. Your precious poster is not circulated yet."

"I fancy we have come a considerable distance," said our hero, coolly. "This poster was in Crosstown when I left, and here you see is a copy stuck up upon my arrival. I think it must have been pretty generally circulated by this time, pointing to a copy stuck on a dead wall outside a window."

Friel said nothing for a moment, but then he broke out into a torrent of wrath, his face being livid, his eyes glistening with rage, and every sense wrought to the highest pitch of excitement.

"The fiends take you!" he screamed. "You have upset all my plans by your infernal honesty. I would have divided with you, and now you've knocked the whole thing in the head. Curse you for a meddling, hypocritical sneak. You've done nothing but try to spoil my game ever since I first saw you. Was it for this I got you out of the jail? Hang you, I'll make you suffer for this!"

"Save your breath to cool your soup, Jack. You can't fool me; I know well enough that you never intended to divvy with me, or with the misguided fellow who first put it in your way to possess this plunder! You might make him believe it, but I know what your feelings toward me are well enough."

Friel surveyed Ralph a moment in silence, and then said:

"We shall see what you are made of presently, you young viper. Hallo there, Joe, Ned; come in."

At the summons the two men outside entered, and Ralph was surprised to see his old enemy, Ned—badly used up to be sure—but the same Ned for all that. The only wonder to Ralph was that the man was alive at all, after having

been thrown from the cars, as he presumed the fellow had been. The two villains sprang upon Ralph, who planted one fist in Joe's eye, and knocked two teeth down Ned's throat with the other. His coat was torn from his back, and his shirt sleeves ripped from wrist to shoulder, exposing his arms and neck, strong, sinewy and muscular, the cords standing out in bold relief, the veins swelling nigh to bursting, and the muscles strained to their utmost. Sheer force of numbers was the only thing that could subdue the lad, and after a protracted struggle, during which he had given his tormentors several stunning blows, the marks of which they would bear for a considerable time, he was thrown upon a bench and securely pinioned.

"Now for the iron!" shouted Friel, and at the words Ned disappeared from the room.

Ralph shuddered, for he now had gathered enough to know that a fearful torture was awaiting him, and as he struggled hopelessly to burst his bonds, an old woman called Mother Meg came into the place in a state of great excitement.

"Ho, ho, you have got him again," she screamed. "Give it to him well this time. Burn his eyes out and roast his heart before his very nose!"

As she uttered these terrible words she suddenly caught sight of Ralph's bared arms and shoulders, and throwing herself at the foot of the bench to which he was secured, fairly screamed:

"Release him! You shall not harm a hair of his head! Release him, I say, or I will give you the torture intended for him!"

As she spoke she pointed to a peculiar discoloration of an odd shape, somewhat resembling a wheel, upon Ralph's left arm, half-way between the elbow and shoulder. It was evidently a birthmark, the smoothness of the skin and the peculiar coloring, a dull brown, precluding the possibility of its having been produced by artificial means, and indeed it had always been there, the boy having been born with it.

"Do you see that?" repeated the woman again. "I know this lad now, and you shall not touch him or harm a finger of him. My God, had I known this before, the poor fellow might have been spared much misery."

"Stand aside," said Friel, harshly, as Ned entered, bearing a red-hot iron in his hand. "This is but the folly of a mad old woman."

He was about to take the iron from Ned when Meg leaped to her feet, and, seizing the glowing bar of metal, brandished it around her head, and striding in front of the intended victim, shrieked hoarsely:

"Back, on your lives, for the first man that advances will get a mark that shall last him all his miserable life! Back, I say, for I will not be gainsaid. The man that dares dispute me shall be branded like Cain, the pattern for all murderers! What! You will have it? Then be the fruit of your folly upon your own head!"

Jack Friel, her own son, braving the woman's fury, had leaped forward, knife in hand, to make short work of poor Ralph and complete his unholy task at a blow, when the woman, like a tigress enraged, gave one sweeping blow, and struck him full across the forehead with the



glowing iron. A sickening smoke and stench arose and with a blood-curdling cry Friel fell to the floor, the knife falling from his palsied grasp. With an answering cry of horror, wrung from her at the thought of what she had done, the woman let fall the hissing iron and fled from the spot where such a fearful scene had just been enacted.

#### CHAPTER XI.—What Ralph Learned.

Overcome by his emotions, Ralph had fainted when the enraged woman had struck her own son over the face with the seething iron, and it was some moments before he recovered himself.

The hut was on fire.

"My god!" groaned the poor boy in his agony, "I shall be burned alive! Is there no help at hand?"

"Oho! you want help; do you? I'll help you into another world, that's what I'll do."

The voice was Friel's, and, turning his head, Ralph saw the man just getting upon his feet. A horrible red mark, from which the blood slowly trickled, extended right across his forehead, his matted locks, scorched and burned in places, hanging down over his eyes, which glittered like a wild beast's. It was a terrible sight, and Ralph turned away to shut it out, Friel laughing like a fiend as he said:

"Ay, curse you, I am not pleasant to look at, I know. I am branded like a felon, and all upon your account. My blood boils like molten iron, my brain fairly bubbles, and there is a pain all through me which threatens to drive me mad. Where is my knife? I can scarcely see. My God, what is this! Fiends and furies, the house is afire."

He had just discovered this, his first thought on being aroused by the sound of Ralph's voice being how he could further vent his spite upon the hapless youth. Now, however, the instinct of self-preservation was stronger than his hate, and realizing that the lad must perish at all events, if left there, he gave vent to a hoarse laugh and quickly fled from the room, which had by this time become a most dangerous place in which to remain. Ralph's eyes lighted on Friel's knife, lying upon the floor, and in an instant he was kneeling upon the burning boards with his head bent forward. To seize the knife in his teeth was but the work of an instant, and another to cut the cords about his arms and wrists. He was free at last, but still in deadly peril, for the room was now one mass of flames and smoke, and through the open door he could see that the fire had already extended to other parts of the house. If he would save himself he must hasten or it will be too late, and realizing this he seized his coat, and throwing it over his head grasped the knife firmly in one hand, and made a dash for the outer hall, where he might possibly still find a loophole of escape. As he reached the hallway he suddenly heard a shrill scream, and looking up, he saw a young girl standing at the head of a flight of stairs, waving her hands despairingly, her whole attitude being one of terror. One glance was sufficient to show Ralph that the young girl was the one he had saved from the wreck, and who had afterwards rescued

him from death. It was Jennie Everett herself, and doubtless Friel had kept her a prisoner in the house, and now in his haste had forgotten her and left her to her fate.

"Save me, if you be human!" she cried, casting an imploring look at Ralph. For an instant Ralph comprehended the situation, and then, in a ringing voice, heard above the noise and confusion, shouted: "Jump! It is the only chance!"

Gathering her skirts about her, the poor girl made the leap, and alighted safely in Ralph's arms, while he, without losing a moment, hurried toward the stairs leading to the street. He had taken but one step down, when a door at the bottom was suddenly thrown open, and a thick cloud of smoke and flame rushed up, putting an effectual stop to his progress.

At this instant a small door close by, which he had not before observed, was opened, and the old woman, Mother Meg appeared. Seizing Ralph by the arm she dragged him with his small burden into a small closet, and closed the door behind her. As she still retained her hold upon Ralph, he could not but obey, and presently he felt himself descending a flight of stone steps, the passage being dark and chill, as though it were already underground. The way was not long, though there were many turnings, and more than once the hag cautioned him about the steps he should take lest he might fall. At last she paused, and pushing the young man upon a stone bench, closed a heavy door with a slam, the noise of a rusty key turning in the lock being heard immediately afterwards. Ralph put the young lady upon the seat beside him, chafing her hands to restore her to consciousness, she having swooned after her rescue. Hardly had he accomplished this when the place was dimly lighted by a candle, which the old woman placed in a cranny of the wall and then said:

"Here you are safe, but it will be necessary to remain until the fire is out."

"How comes this sudden interest in my behalf?" asked Ralph. "When I first saw you you were not so eager to save me from your precious son."

"I did not know you then."

"You knew I was Railroad Ralph."

"True; but it was not by that title that I first knew you."

"What do you mean by that? Do you know me?"

"Yes, better than you think. I was present when you were born, and saw you many times when you were a baby. Your mother did me many a kindness when others would have injured me. But for her my life would have been worse than it was, for while she lived I could not commit wrong. Had she not died I might still be an honest woman, and my son might not be a criminal."

"But tell me who were you. I do not remember you."

"I was the nurse. You were a pretty boy, though I used to say that the strange birthmark on your arm spoiled your good looks. But for that I would never have known you again, for it is fifteen years since I saw you, and you have grown handsomer than I thought you would be. Besides, you lived far away in the East then, and how should I know you had come West?"



"That was after my mother had been dead three years."

"And I have already come here, my poor son being crazy for a roving life. He was too much for me after your mother died. She used to restrain him, but I could not. Ah! times have changed since then."

"What did you say about my being known to your under a different name?"

"Your mother's name was not Wright when you were born. She married again shortly before her death, her husband being named Wright. He gave you his own name when she died, and but few persons knew that you were not his son."

"I did not know it myself."

"And probably not more than one or two know it now."

"And my real name is——"

"Ralph Shepton."

"Why, that is my mother's maiden name!" cried Jennie, who had listened in silence to these revelations.

"Had she a brother Ralph?" asked old Meg.

"Surely, but he has been dead many years."

"Is your name Everett?" asked Meg.

"Yes."

"Then it is right, for Ralph Shepton's only sister married a gentleman by that name. Your mother is dead?"

"Yes."

"And your father is one of the wealthiest men in this part of the country?"

"I believe so. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, well, it's only an old woman's curiosity, after all. I dare say you'll get a pretty penny some day."

Then she withdrew a short distance, leaving the two lovers, for such they had now become, through their mutual dangers, alone with each other. They had hardly exchanged a dozen words, however, when there came a sudden crash, a terrible rumbling was heard above them, and the ceiling began to give way in many places. Ralph sprang to his feet to ascertain the cause of the disturbance, when the door was thrown open, and Jack Friel's accomplice appeared in evident haste. A gleam of light illuminated the place, and for an instant Ralph was blinded by it. Then a shower of bricks fell at his feet, and springing aside, he looked around for his companion. She had disappeared, and with her the old woman who had made such strange revelations. At the next instant the door was closed again, and Ralph was alone in profound darkness.

Thinking Mother Meg had played him false again he succeeded in getting out into the air. He wandered about and presently sat down behind a stone wall, and soon heard voices on the other side. They were part of Friel's gang and were plotting to wreck a train on which would be Merritt, the superintendent. Ralph got up after the villains had left and walking toward the town he met Clif, to whom he recounted all that had happened, saying he must rescue the young lady, Jennie Everett, from the villains. Ralph soon left Clif, and was walking along in the darkness when he was accosted by Mother Meg, who said she would take him to the young lady. She also told him to look out for Clif, as he was his enemy. She led him to a house and entering she took him to a

room where sat Jennie Everett. Soon the young people were in each other's arms. They soon left to take a train to Jennie's home. When they got to the station Ralph was handed two telegrams, one stating Mr. Merritt and Jennie's father would arrive on the night express. One to take his daughter home and the other to confer with Ralph about the arrest of Friel.

Meantime Friel had learned all about the men coming on the express, and made up his mind to wreck the train at the drawbridge. Friel had a bottle of chloroform in his pocket and approaching the bridge tender he grasped him and shoved the uncorked bottle under his nose. The man was soon senseless. Soon the train whistle was heard. Rushing to the engine house, Friel set the machinery in motion that opened the draw. Then he rushed ashore to confront the figure of Railroad Ralph.

## CHAPTER XII.—Weaving the Web.

Clif stood outside a restaurant where Ralph and Jennie were partaking of their much-needed refreshment, and communed with himself for some minutes.

"I can get rid of them both," he mused, "but after all, why should I hurt Ralph? I shall have nothing to fear from him, and this money is in my possession. It's one matter to throw blame on him to screen myself, and quite another to take his life. He can't do me any harm, and if I can get him out of this I'll do it, providing it leaves me all safe."

In this fallacious manner did he reason, seeming to think that he was perfectly justified in committing any crime but murder, at which even his guilty soul revolted. He had a certain regard for Ralph, despite all the injuries he had done the latter, and now he began to feel a certain sense of remorse, not for what he had done, but at the thought of compassing the death of one who had been so good a friend to him.

"I am afraid that chattering old woman has been telling Ralph something," he muttered, "and he has already begun to be suspicious of me. Now that I want to do him a good turn I am afraid that I shall be balked. If I tell him not to take that train he will be sure to do it and lose his life, or, if he doesn't take it, he won't send the girl by it, and up goes my chance of a fortune. If I allow matters to go on, they will be married and I lose all, when by a clever stroke now I can step into a fortune by virtue of my relationship to Jennie Everett. I am not going to let the money slip, but Ralph must be spared. How am I going to bring it about? I must get him off to some wild-goose chase, and detain him until too late to catch the train. He can't inherit the whole fortune unless he marries, then he will get some of it anyhow. I shall see that he doesn't catch that train. I can't bear to think of having his blood upon my head."

Had Clif known all the provisions in regard to the property, having found only a portion of the papers relating to it in the safe which he had broken open, he would not have been so ready to spare his friend's life. After thinking over several plans, he left the place hurriedly, having determined to seek the aid of Ned, Friel's pal, the



man being at that hour, as he knew, in the city. He had gone about a quarter of a mile, when he suddenly came upon Tim, the messenger-boy, the same lad that Ralph had said was so much attached to him because he made him do what was right.

"Hallo, Clif," said this lad irreverently. "Haven't seen you for a long time. Where've you been?"

"On my vacation, you young scamp. What are you doing out at this time of night?"

"I'm a telegraph boy now. Left the road. me and old Merritt couldn't get along together."

"Oh, you couldn't!"

"No, he was too fruppish for me. Besides, he wouldn't trust Ralph Wright, and I couldn't stand that, you know."

"You are very fond of Ralph?"

"Cause he hasn't any nonsense about him. I'd like you better if you didn't have so much."

"You're a plain-spoken young imp, I must say."

"I was born so, and can't help it. Have you got a light?"

"Are you off duty now?"

"Yes, and I've got my pipe already loaded. I can get a jolly good smoke before I reach the old woman's."

"Would you mind delivering a message for me if I give you a cigar instead of your pipe?"

"Would I mind it? You-bet I wouldn't!"

"All right. Come into Joyce's and wait till I write the note."

Giving the precocious youth the wherewithal to light his short pipe, and a full-flavored Havana beside, Clif sat down and wrote down the following note to Ralph:

"Ralph Wright, Sir:—We have now in our custody a man called Ned, an accomplice of Jack Friel's, and desiring to secure all the evidence possible before to-morrow would respectfully request that you step around to our office at once, where you will be detained but a few minutes. We give you our word that your liberty will not be interfered with, as you may see by the enclosed note. Respectfully,

"John Jones, Chief of Police."

After writing this, Clif took a telegraph blank from his pocket, and wrote upon it the following:

"Jones, Chief of Police, Blanktown:—Ralph Wright will give you what information you require. He is reliable, despite the ugly rumors concerning him. Please allow him perfect liberty. You will now find him in the depot.

—Merritt, Supt."

While Clif had been writing the above, Tom was so busy smoking that he did not notice what the other was doing, and after enclosing both papers in a sealed envelope, he called the lad and said:

"Leave this note for Ralph at the station, and then get home, or you'll have to sleep on a doorstep all night. Here's another cigar and now just hook it!"

Tom entered the depot, and not seeing Ralph, gave the note to a porter, instructing him to give it to the young engineer on his return. The man, knowing Tom to be a messenger, took charge of

the missive, promising to deliver it as soon as Ralph came in. When Tom had departed, Clif determined to wait a while before carrying out the rest of his plan, but growing tired of staying in the tavern, he went out upon the street. As he did so a man approached him and said:

"What's the racket now, young fellow? Sent Ralph off on a wild-goose chase, have yer? That was well done, but you've got to change your plans a bit."

The man was Ned, who had again escaped death as if by a miracle, and was as ready as ever to enter into any scheme of mischief.

"What do you mean?" asked Clif, flushing.

"That I listened and heard all your racket. The boss of this place is a pal o' mine. Now, I'll tell you what we'll do."

"Well?"

"You don't want Ralph to go by that train?"

"No."

"That's all right. I don't want him to either, 'cause I want to kill him myself."

"He must be spared."

"No, he mustn't!" hissed Ned. "Do you know that he can give us all away—you with the rest?"

"He would not."

"That's where you're off your reckonin'. He'll give you away before anyone else, so as to shield himself."

"It's a lie!"

"Perhaps it is, but don't say nothin' till you read this message which he sent to Merritt. One of the operators give it to me. He's a pal of mine."

With this Ned produced a crumpled paper and handed it to Clif, who took it to the light and read with great interest.

"Why, this is the original message," he cried, in an excited tone. "I know Ralph's handwriting."

"To be sure it is," responded Ned, with a chuckle. "I got it so as to show you I wasn't lying."

"This thing settles it," answered Clif. "What do you propose to do?"

The paper, which had decided Clif to sacrifice Ralph after all, was a clever forgery, as the reader does not need to be told, and read thus:

"Mr. Merritt:—Clif Wayne is the real thief, and has been in league with Friel all along. He is in Blanktown, and could be easily arrested to-night. I will help you do it.—Ralph.

It was but a part of Friel's plan against Clif to make him think that Ralph had betrayed him, and the outlaw's pal, Pete, had just finished this piece of work, intrusting Ned with it, while he himself went about other matters.

"What do you mean to do?" repeated Clif.

"Sent him from the station-house up to Jones's place, or at least make him think he's going there."

"Where will he go then?"

"To a den of ours, where I will take good care he does not get away."

"He will never escape if he gets into your hands."

"You're right."

"I did not think he would betray me, but this



convinces me, and I wouldn't spare him now if he went on his knees."

"No more you wouldn't. Be off with you now, and take care of the girl while I work up this case."

"And I'll see you again——"

"When Old Nick opens his court in the morning."

When Ralph and Jennie finished their supper they returned to the depot. Ralph left her to get tickets and received the telegram from the porter to call at the chief of police's house. As it was near by he went, where he was entrapped by Ned and some of Friel's gang. Hearing them talk of wrecking the express upon which Jennie's father and Mr. Merritt were coming, he made desperate efforts to escape and succeeded in doing so.

Meanwhile Clif was talking to Jennie in the station. A man approached and put him under arrest for the safe robbery. Then he made him board the very train that was to be wrecked at the drawbridge. Clif was in a terrible fix.

### CHAPTER XIII.—Called To An Account.

"So, Jack Friel, we meet in the very nick!" cried Ralph, as he leaped upon the drawbridge.

He had made the best of the short time allowed him, and had reached the draw at the exact moment that Friel had started to return. He saw it begin to swing around, and knew that there was no time to lose, as both trains could even then be heard approaching. He gave one glance into the bridge-keeper's box, and saw that there was no hope to be expected from that quarter, but that the safety of many valuable lives must depend upon his own efforts alone. There was yet time to spring upon the draw before it swung out, and making the leap, he landed squarely in front of Friel as the latter was leaving. The moon had just emerged from the thick clouds which had obscured it, and Ralph's face and form were plainly revealed to the outlaw, who started back in alarm.

"Curse the stupid young wretch," he hissed, "he has let his victim escape. If he lives we are all lost."

"Villain!" cried Ralph, "what new deviltry is this? Do you not know——"

"That the midnight expresses are due here at this very minute, nearly, and that with the draw open they will be wrecked. I do know it and I know who are aboard as well."

"You shall not succeed in your diabolical schemes."

"Who will prevent me?"

"I will!"

As Ralph uttered these words he sprang at Friel, but the latter eluded him and made for the center of the bridge, laughing exultantly. Toot-toot! The trains, approaching the draw on either side, have given signals and in a few minutes will be rushing headlong to destruction. Something must be done, and quickly, too, or a frightful catastrophe will occur there being no one to give warning. Ralph has never swerved his duty, no matter how terrible the trial, and he now resolves to do his utmost, come what may. Provided he can overpower Friel, there

is yet time for him to swing the draw back into place and prevent an accident. The outlaw is wily, however, and will elude him, so as to create delay and waste the precious moments, for every one of which Ralph would give a fortune.

He must be swift and sure, or all is lost, and with this thought in his mind, he springs after the villain and overtakes him at the middle of the draw. His scarred face is made more ghastly by the pale light that falls upon it, and there is a frightened look in it now, as if he felt his end approaching, which is terrible to see. He is desperate, moreover, and at bay, for even if the accident is not prevented, he has but small chance of escaping Ralph's vengeance. He seems to feel this and to know that now one of them must die, that this is to be the decisive struggle, and that either one or the other, and perhaps both, will never see the light of another day. He wishes to avoid a struggle, if possible, until the trains have been wrecked, so as to have the grim satisfaction of knowing that he has caused the death of others, even, if he is to die himself. Therefore he seeks to elude Ralph as long as he can, chuckling at the lad's eagerness, and listening anxiously for the nearer approach of the imperiled trains. Ralph is fairly mad with anxiety, and leaping from tie to tie he throws himself upon Friel before the latter can get away, and the struggle begins. Ralph cares more to get rid of his opponent than to kill him, and he therefore directs all his energies towards throwing the outlaw from the draw, so as to be able to work unmolested. Whatever he does must be done quickly, as the time is getting woefully short, and even now may not suffice.

He can see the headlights of both engines glaring upon him, hear the roar and rattle, and almost feel the bridge tremble with the vibration imparted to the air by the movements of the coming monsters. All depends upon the work of an instant, and with bated breath and throbbing heart, he throws all his strength into one terrible effort. He lifts the outlaw from his feet, though the man is no mean load, staggers with him to the edge of the draw, and hurls him headlong into the stream. The man utters a piercing shriek, and tries to seize Ralph and drag him over, hoping even yet to frustrate the daring fellow. He beats the air wildly with his hands, however, and whirls through space, leaving Ralph unharmed. Aye, the lad is safe enough, but what of the lives he has sworn to protect? Without bestowing a single thought upon the outlaw, Ralph rushed to the lever, and exerting all his strength, set in motion the machinery which turned the bridge.

The latter was now wide open, extending up and down the stream, but under Ralph's exertions it began to move rapidly into its place. It was well that everything was in good condition, for otherwise the catastrophe might not even then have been averted. Its movements were rapid, however, and scarce a minute elapsed from the moment Ralph touched the lever before it had swung halfway to its position. He may yet be too late, for the trains are frightfully near, and no one is nigh to give warning of the danger.

Click! It is in its proper place, and at that instant the trains are within ten feet of either end. A hasty glance convinces Ralph that they are



safe, and thus a new peril threatens. The two trains cross simultaneously, and leave no room for anything but themselves. There is but a narrow plank for him to stand upon while the trains are crossing, and this will afford but a precarious position. He will be certain to be jolted off if he remains, and yet there is nothing else to support him. If he keeps the track he will be killed, and if he jumps he runs the risk of being drowned, as the current below is swift and strong, full of treacherous eddies and sunken rocks, many lives having already been lost there. From both sides come the trains, and at the same time leaving him apparently no alternative but death. Suddenly he sees a way out of his dilemma, though it is a desperate expedient, and he instantly puts it into execution. Dropping between the two tracks, he seizes the cross-beam of heavy oak by both hands and hangs suspended while the engines and cars go thundering by over his head. Smoke and steam, sparks and dust fall all around him, but, unheeding these, he clings tenaciously to his support, though it seems more than once as if he would be shaken off, and never relaxes his grasp until the last car has passed, and the rails have ceased to vibrate.

"That was a lucky escape," he muttered, as he drew himself up and sat on the plank between the rails. "I wonder how Friel came out."

The sky had become overcast again, and Ralph could see nothing distinctly, the waters being black and surging beneath him, and a solitary light here and there all that told of the presence of the city. It was some time before he felt strong enough to walk across the bridge without fear of falling, and even then the time occupied in crossing was considerable, so that when he at last reached the center of the city where he could find a telegraph office the day was beginning to break. There was nothing to be done except find a place to rest, and this was soon accomplished, our hero falling asleep as soon as he touched the pillow, and never waking until the middle of the forenoon. Then he went out and made inquiries at the station whether Mr. Merritt had been heard from, receiving answer that the gentleman had been looking for him and had returned to Brandford. Ralph at once telegraphed that he would come on immediately, and then, finding that he would be obliged to wait an hour, strolled off towards the river. As he neared the bank he saw a crowd collected at a certain point, and feeling a curiosity to know what should occasion such a gathering, quickened his pace.

"What's up?" he inquired of a man whom he met returning from the place.

"Man drowned. They say he must have fallen in somewhere near the bridge. He's badly cut up."

"Does any one know him?"

"Not that I know of."

Ralph pressed forward, and making his way through the crowd, forced his way to the front. There, lying upon the cold ground, was the body of a man wet and stained with river mud, the clothing disordered, the hair matted and clotted with blood, and on the forehead, pale and cold, a deep scar as from a branding iron. It was the body of Jack Friel, the outlaw, called to his last account, upon whom the crowd gazed so piteously, and which the waters had cast up.

#### CHAPTER XIV.—Conclusion.

"It is Jack Friel," said Ralph. "He would have wrecked the midnight express last night, and I threw him off!"

A murmur arose at these words, and Ralph might have suffered violence had not an officer stepped up and said to him:

"You had better get away, for I think that some of Friel's friends are here. You can make a statement if you wish. The coroner has been already notified, and the body will be taken away shortly."

At that moment there was a commotion in the crowd, and an old woman made her way toward the body and threw herself upon it. It was old Meg, the mother of the outlaw.

"So you have come to your death at last, have you?" she cried. "Lucky for you that the hangman has been cheated out of a job. You always did go against honest men."

"Who is this?" asked the officer.

"His mother."

Old Meg heard the words and looked up quickly.

"So you are safe, Ralph Wright, or Ralph Septon, are you?" she said. "I am glad of it! How did this villain come to his death?"

Ralph was about to answer when the coroner's deputy arrived, and the woman was pushed aside. Ralph and the officer quickly made their way from the place, and the crowd dispersed, some following the body to the coroner's and others going about their business, if they had any to attend to. The lad went to the office of the chief of police and made a statement which was taken down, Mr. Jones saying that the lad might possibly be required to make another at some later day, and asking him for his address, which was given. He then went to the station, having just time to catch his train, and in a few minutes he was whirling away towards Brandford.

When Clif became aware that he was upon the doomed train, his terror was so great that for some moments he was unable to speak a word.

"Stop the train," he then cried, "or all is lost!"

"And have a horde of your pals coming swarming in upon us," answered the detective. "I guess not."

"But I tell you that——"

"If you don't keep quiet I shall have to gag you or take you into the baggage car."

Clif became quiet then, more from desperation than anything else, and mused to himself:

"I shall escape disgrace, at all events, and shall not perish alone."

"Ralph has betrayed me," he continued, "and if he is killed by that villain Ned it will serve him just right. I did not think he would be so base."

He seemed to forget his own baseness, however, selfish and cruel as he was, but this was not for long, as presently the thought of his approaching death sobered him, and he whispered to the detective:

"I will tell you all, for there is no hope for me now."

Then he confessed the whole thing, the detective taking notes as he proceeded, and omitting nothing. When he had concluded, Clif suddenly gazed



out of the window and said, in a state of great excitement:

"Have we crossed the bridge?"

"We have crossed several of them. Which do you mean?"

"The draw over Muddy Run."

"Long ago. It was soon after you began to tell me this story."

"And the other train passed us?"

"Yes."

"And we are safe?"

"Don't you see that we are? Why do you ask such questions?"

Clif had said nothing about the intention of wrecking the train, and now, knowing that for some reason the plan must have failed, said:

"Was Friel arrested to-night?"

"No."

"Or any of his pals?"

"No."

Then he laughed and said hysterically:

"That's a pretty story I've told you, isn't it? There's not a word of truth in the whole thing."

He remained silent for the remainder of the journey, and when he arrived at Brandford was taken to the court-house, where he was detained in a waiting-room instead of being put in a cell. He was committed for examination; upon the detective's testimony, and late in the afternoon was set free upon obtaining heavy bail. Meanwhile the news of Friel's death had been received, and Mr. Merritt had met Ralph, treating him with the utmost cordiality. As Clif was leaving the court-house they entered it, and the young man said hotly:

"I didn't think you would go back on me, Ralph. You swore that you would say nothing, and you set the detectives upon me."

"You are mistaken. I have said nothing."

"You told Ned that——"

"I told Ned? Why, it was Ned himself that told me about your—— Well, never mind," he added hastily, seeing Mr. Merritt looking at him.

"I know all now, Ralph," the superintendent declared kindly. "You have kept your word, although it has cost you so much."

"But Friel is dead, is he?" said Clif, turning away. "Then I am safe, and no one can appear against me."

"Except your own confession," said the detective, approaching.

Clif flushed deeply and hurried away, while Mr. Merritt said to our hero:

"Ralph, all is clear now. You will forgive me my unjust suspicions?"

"Freely."

"And you will resume your place on the road?"

"If you wish it."

"I can do better by him than that," said Mr. Everett, the father of Jennie, who at that moment came up.

"Indeed!"

"Yes. I owe him many obligations upon my daughter's account, and I propose to take him into the business with me. I shall need an honest man to look after things when I am gone."

"What do you say, Ralph?" asked the superintendent.

"I think I shall have to oblige both, so until the year is out I will stay on the road, and after

that go with Mr. Everett. The offer is such a good one that I feel I ought not to refuse."

"I am satisfied," replied Mr. Everett.

"And so am I," added Mr. Merritt.

This arrangement was entered into accordingly, and at the end of a couple of years Ralph was admitted to partnership with Mr. Everett, having then come of age.

He had been married to Jennie previous to that time by a few weeks, and their happiness seemed completely assured. Clif Wayne never appeared for trial, having forfeited his bonds and disappeared, and from that day nothing was ever heard of him, his whereabouts being a matter of total uncertainty. The outlaw Ned succeeded in making his way unmolested to the sea coast, where he obtained a position on a ship bound to Australia. He remained in that country many years, and Ralph heard nothing of him until quite recently, when he received a letter in which the man recounted the changes that had taken place in his life, and expressed a hope that he might some day see the one who had spared him for better days. He was the owner of a large sheep farm, and by strict attention to business had acquired a considerable fortune, having married well, and being the father of three fine daughters and a son, his oldest child, whom he had christened Ralph.

Jennie laughed when her husband told her this, but he replied that it was better to name an outlaw's child after an honest man than to give an honest child the name of an outlaw, and Jennie agreed. Ralph has never seen Ned since that eventful night, but he is satisfied with the man's repentance, and feels assured that his altered life is the reward for his own leniency, and that Ned alive and honest is worth a dozen of Ned dead and a criminal. Jack Friel was buried in Potters Field, and his old mother disappeared soon afterward, never to be seen again; so that whether she is dead or alive still remains a mystery. There was no trouble in proving Ralph's claim to the property, and as he became Jennie's husband before she arrived at her majority, the money was preserved to them, and, with what Ralph already had, made a tidy fortune. And this is all I have to say of Railroad Ralph, having related the whole story of his trials and triumphs; and so, having finished my task, I will take leave of my readers for the present, until I overhaul my old note-books and determine what one of my old friends shall next have his adventures made known to the public.

Next week's issue will contain "THE BOY PILOT OF LAKE MICHIGAN."

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A gentleman was disturbed from his rest in the middle of the night by some one knocking on the street door. "Who's there?" he asked. "A friend," was the answer. "What do you want?" "Want to stay here all night." "Queer taste! Stay there by all means!" was the benevolent reply.



#### AGED HUNTER GOT MANY DEER.

J. M. Hull, ninety-year-old hunter, of Duns-muir, Cal., is going out this fall to bag another deer. During his sixty-five years of residence in California, Hull claims to have bagged 1,500 deer, most of which were shot before there was a legal limit on the number that might be killed by one hunter. Incidentally, Hull goes for a six-mile hike every day in the year.

#### GOAT WAS ONLY THIRSTY.

And now comes the "harmless" billy goat displaying some of his unique qualifications.

When a carload of lime was loaded at Cape Girardeau, Mo., Mr. Goat, unnoticed, made his way into the car and was locked therein. Eight days after, when the seals of the car were broken at the destination, Doniphan, Mo., and when the door was opened out jumped Mr. Goat, spry, but apparently thirsty.

He was quickly treated to a drink of "Mountain Dew," which bubbles from a spring near Doniphan, and was happy. He seemed none the worse for his "Volstead feat."

#### IDENTIFY CATTLE BY THEIR NOSE PRINTS

Nose prints of cattle are the latest means of identification used to determine the authenticity of any claim that an animal has a blooded pedigree, says Popular Mechanics. This method of identifying cattle was adopted by a University of Minnesota professor, who thus utilized a variation of the familiar Bertillon system employed

by the police in cataloguing humans by fingerprints.

Since the inauguration of the system a few months ago some 500 prints have been taken, and the closest examination has failed to reveal a duplication among the different breeds. Neither has there been found any change in the design as the animal grows older, so that a print attached to a registration certificate at once identifies and prevents the substitution of inferior cattle.

#### BOLD SEA LION CLIMBS ABOARD A SEAPLANE

A bold sea lion took charge of a seaplane, No. 3, on a destroyer range near the Coronado Islands, San Diego, Cal., recently.

The seaplane, in charge of Ensign Edward Dolieck, alighted on the water to wait for the destroyers to take their position for practice, and the side door of the aft compartment was open to let the gases from the engine escape. Suddenly the Ensign and his crew were surprised to hear a resounding "woof" from the compartment. In it they found a sea lion weighing some seventy-five pounds which had evidently floundered up the incline leading to the compartment and decided to remain.

The crew tried to put the sea lion off, but he resented that attempt, fighting bravely, and bit one of the crew in the arm. Then the crew decided to let him stay and piled life preservers on him to keep him quiet. In that position he was taken back to North Island to serve as a mascot for the seaplane force.

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## Chased To China

— OR —

### HOW DAN SAVED HIS GOOD NAME

By WILLIAM WADE

(A SERIAL STORY)

#### CHAPTER XV.

##### A Cab Chase Through the Streets of London.

"I've been thinking over the late business," he said, "and I've come to the conclusion that our man spotted us when we were in the street, and of course, knew that we were after him. He waited until I went up the winding stairway to make a search through the rooms, and then he sent that girl who passed me down to tell the fellows at the table to kick up some sort of a row that would give him an opportunity to have Dan mauled so as to reduce the opposition to his escape when he reached the barroom. He could probably depend upon somebody getting in a blow at me, or throwing a glass at me, just as happened, and that would reduce the force against him to Dick, who would be taken by surprise and easily disposed of. It was a scheme worthy of such a man as Slippery Sam Cash, and it has succeeded."

The afternoon sun was sinking low in the west when the man at the Scotland Yard station called to Prendergast and handed him a telegram that the telegraph clerk had just brought in.

The operator from the agency looked it over and then came back to the boys.

"Just as I thought," he said.

"What is it?" cried the two boys at once.

"They've found the boat about half way between two small towns perhaps fifteen miles away."

"And the man?"

"No word of him, and the telegram adds that the boat had been hauled up a short distance on shore or else run up there under its own power, probably the latter, and that the dryness of the craft shows that it had been there no less than half an hour. I am strongly of the opinion that the rascal ran the boat up on a sloping shore at pretty good speed and then jumped from it onto dry land, so that he wouldn't have any wet shoes or trousers to betray him if the police were watching out for him. Oh, he's a clever one, you may be sure."

"What's the next probable move?" Dick asked. Prendergast reflected.

"I should say," he at length decided, "that from where he was when he jumped ashore from the launch that he would probably take the first train that came to the nearest town to him. He could reach the town by walking in a short time, and there are plenty of trains that would take him either way, that is, toward Dover or towards London. I knew that he has a fondness for Paris,

and with plenty of money in his pockets he will be likely to head for the gay French capital."

"Then let us leave word here and at the agency," said Dan, "so that you could be reached by telegraph anywhere along the line in the event of any later news coming up, and let us get to the railroad station that will take us to Dover the soonest."

"All right," said Prendergast.

The telephone made the necessary arrangements for Prendergast, and also arranged matters in relation to the boys' baggage, and then a cab was called and they drove away to the station.

"You are certainly hot on his trail," said Prendergast to Dan.

"He is the man who put up the job that made some persons think that I was a thief," said Dan, "a belief that they still hold, I fear, and if I had to journey across mountains and deserts and do it on foot in order to capture that villain I would do it, for the principal object I have in life now is to save my good name."

"You're fully justified in what you and your friend are doing, and I wish you may catch him soon," said Prendergast. "He's a gay chap when he's got money in his pockets, and it's more than likely that you'll run across him in Paris."

"Aren't you going with us?" asked Dan.

"I'm no good to you there," smiling Prendergast, "for I don't happen to speak French."

"Neither do I," said Dan.

"But that happens to be one of my few accomplishments," spoke up Dick Dale, "something that my mother insisted that was a necessity in a polite education, and now it may come in handy."

"It certainly will," said Prendergast, "although your letter of introduction will give you all the aid you want from the Paris agency."

Arrived at the London station of the South-eastern railway, they left the cab waiting by Prendergast's instructions, and went to the ticket office both to make their purchases and to get information. They learned that the Dover express, the train that would bring them soonest to their destination, did not start for an hour, so it was agreed that they should fortify themselves for their journey with a good meal.

"How far is it to Dover?" asked Dan, when they were eating at a restaurant to which the cab had brought them.

"Sixty miles," answered Prendergast.

"That means a little less than two hours' travel?"

"Yes."

"What time is it now?"

"Half past six."

"And our train starts a little after seven, which means that we will get into Dover between nine and ten. What can be done to-night?"

"We can go to the police, who have been notified by wire, and find out what they have learned, if anything."

"When do the packets sail for Calais?"

"There is always one early in the morning, and there may be one during the day, but never at night."

(To be continued.)

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## ITEMS OF INTEREST

## TOO FAST FOR HIM

Figuratively speaking, David Davis, seventy-nine years of age of Sisterville, W. Va., was bowled over the other day.

He did two things which stand out in his career. The first was to board an interurban car and the second was to visit Sisterville. The trip was Davis's first on a trolley car. Although he has been a lifelong resident of Tyler County, this was his first visit to Sistersville, only eighteen miles away.

"It's a purty big city, but it's far too fast for me—far too fast," he mused as he started through the street.

"I never allowed there was that much water in the world," he said as he looked out on the Ohio River.

After a few hours he started back home to be in time to drive in the cows.

## HORN OF WHITE RHINOCEROS A WART

The great white rhinoceros of the upper valley of the Nile has several remarkable characteristics which mark the difference between it and its smaller cousins, the ordinary rhinoceroses of Africa, Asia and Malaysia.

According to Dr. Herbert Lang of the American Museum of National History, who recently returned after studying it in its native haunts, its lower lip is armed with a plate of horn as a protection against the sharp swordgrass upon which it feeds.

Another strange thing is that the great horns which it carries on its nose—the front one of which is about twice as long as the rear one—do not grow from the bone, but from the skin. This is continuous under the base of the horn. Dr. Lang says, in a bulletin of the Zoological Society, that the horns are attached to the skin by slender fibres, and two days after the animal is dead they can be plucked off with ease. Therefore these huge horns are not weapons of defense but simply tools which the huge brute uses for pushing its way through the dense jungle. Dr. Lang says the white rhinoceros is a sociable and inoffensive beast. It never attacks men and never quarrels with its own kind. It has the habit of taking a daily mud bath. There are only about 3,000 of them left, the others having been slaughtered as were our American buffaloes.

## VENUS ALONE FITTED FOR HABITATION

The habitability of the planets is seriously discussed in the 1920 report of the Smithsonian Institution, which has just been published. According to C. G. Abbot, who deals with the subject, Venus offers the old hope, at least for the type of life familiar on the earth. Of course, it is conceivable that life might be fitted to a different environment, just as it is conditioned exactly to function in this atmosphere.

The moon is out of the question, thinks Mr. Abbott, being waterless, treeless and airless. The

outer four planets—Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune—are, as shown by their low density, mainly in a gaseous state. This fact, coupled with their very low temperatures, owing to their immense solar distances, makes it very unlikely that there are living beings on these four planets.

Mercury, like the moon, is an airless, waterless waste, besides being baked with a terrific heat, so that this planet also is out of the running. The probable average temperature of Mars is 60 degrees below zero, and its climate is drier than the Sahara Desert, so that here also conditions seem unsuitable for life, leaving only Venus as a possibility.

Here conditions are most favorable. Venus reflects light as if it were all cloudy, and so probably it contains plenty of moisture. Its temperature is about the same as that of the earth, and all other conditions are apparently compatible with the existence of intelligent life. Dr. Abbott concludes that the only practicable method of communication with any possible planetary neighbors is by wireless, which may be possible, although the cost would be immense. Among the stars there may be very probably thousands of dark, habitable globes, but owing to the inconceivably great distances we cannot know about them.

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## David Gouldstone's Heiress

By HORACE APPLETON

"Monmouth House, Grosvenor Square," I repeated, as my immediate chief told me that I was to go there without delay. "That was the Earl of Kingston's house. Who am I to ask for?"

"Mr. Ralph Dundas."

"An East Indian merchant?"

"The same. Do you know him?"

"By sight. Very wealthy, delicate in health, married second wife nearly two years ago. She was the heiress of David Gouldstone, also an East India merchant in the city."

"These are the preliminary particulars as accurately as they can be expressed," said the head of the office. "Mr. Ralph Dundas took Monmouth House for a term of years when he married Miss Gouldstone. His first wife—a friend of the second—left a little child of about three years old—a girl, I believe. Mr. Ralph Dundas, I fear, is very unhappy; but from the information I have received, as yet I cannot conceive why he should be so. It seems to me a strange thing, Poynter, but my experience has taught me that one's troubles increase in this world almost in exact ratio with one's fortune."

I went home at once and assumed the most faultless and fashionable morning dress. Then I took a hansom to Grosvenor Square, and on arriving at the principal entrance of Monmouth House, presented a card, upon which were inscribed the words: "Major Keith, 43d Madras, N. L. I."

I was conducted by a gorgeous footman in livery to a magnificent suite of apartments, and after a delay of about five minutes, during which time I was looking from the window over the gardens, a voice apparently surprised me by uttering the words:

"What can I do for you, sir. I have not the honor of knowing you. No doubt you wish to see my brother, Colonel Dundas."

I turned round to see a tall, handsome, but delicate-looking gentleman of about forty-five years of age.

Drawing from my waistcoat my own true card, I said:

"I do not wish to see your brother—yet. This is my real name, but I thought it best not to let a servant know my business with you, sir," and I handed him the official card.

He was silent for a painfully long period. At last he asked:

"Are you familiar with Shakespeare's works, Mr. Poynter?"

"Tolerably."

"Do you know the play of 'Othello'?"

"Well."

"You remember the passage in which Othello endeavors to prevail upon Iago to watch Desdemona? He has not the courage to put it plainly and openly, and so at last he says: 'Set on thy wife to observe.' This is nearly the position I am in, and yet I am not jealous of my wife."

"Something more than this must be explained before I consent to look after a lady of Mrs. Dun-

das's position and unimpeachable reputation. Besides, Mr. Dundas, we are not permitted to work for the purpose of getting up evidence for the divorce courts."

"I shall confide in you. Mrs. Dundas had a respectable fortune of her own when we were married over which she had absolute control. In addition to this, my check book was always at her disposal. I never doubted her—no; and Heaven be my judge, I do not doubt her now!"

"You have discovered that your wife has been in the habit of spending or disbursing certain sums of money?"

"Certain sums of money," was the reply.

"Any brother or member of her family alive and in bad circumstances?"

"She has no relations."

"Any former lovers?"

"That is what puzzles me," cried Mr. Dundas, in agony. "Miss Gouldstone—my wife before marriage—had a great many suitors, but no one she favored as much as——"

"Yourself."

"Would to Heaven it were so!" the gentleman groaned. "No," he resumed, after a pause. "The favored lover was my brother!"

"Colonel Dundas!" I said, and my habit in coarser cases led me to whistle nearly as soon as the words were uttered.

"I also loved her," Mr. Dundas went on, "and it was only lately that I discovered from a sister that Walter—the colonel—knew this, and, my dear sir, he sacrificed his own happiness for my sake. He exchanged from the Guards into a regiment going to India, so that Miriam Gouldstone should become my wife."

"You will do me a favor if you grant me twenty-four hours to think over the case."

"Willingly."

The gentleman held out his hand as we parted. After grasping mine warmly he said, going to a drawer in his writing table:

"You will require something for the expense of this inquiry," and he handed me a folded Bank of England note.

As I walked downstairs I glanced at it. The sum was the largest I had ever received up till that time, and was a very respectable one.

Two strange things occurred as I reached the marble-floored grand hall. A young lady passed me and slipped a piece of paper in my hand. This I conveyed to my pocket without being observed. As the porter opened the massive door the bell rang, and I had just time to step aside and turn my head away, when Jimmy Salter, late of our force, but now a private inquiry agent, stepped forward, saying:

"Colonel Dundas, if you please."

I have had a few surprises in my time, but this was the most peculiar one I ever had in my life. When I got to Piccadilly, I took the paper out of my pocket and was simply thunderstruck to find it a thin envelope, addressed to Major Keith.

I opened the envelope, and found a smaller one wrapped in a thin slip of paper.

Upon this latter was written these words:

"Major Keith will do an unhappy lady a favor that can never be repaid if he will at once, personally, take care that the inclosed note reaches the person for whom it is intended."

I looked at the note and found it addressed—



Inspector Poynter—and the office of the division to which I was then attached was clearly written below. No letter was ever so promptly or unexpectedly delivered.

It ran something to this effect:

"Sir: For nearly two years I have been the victim of the most cruel imposition. I dare not tell my husband, who is in delicate health, the position I am in; and I feel—I know—that I am the object of suspicion to one, my dearest relation by marriage, who ought to have judged me differently. I scarcely know what to write to you. A perfect stranger to you, I hope you will aid me in what I may call the climax of my misery. I leave my residence—Monmouth House, Grosvenor Square—to-night, about eight o'clock, for Covent Garden Opera House, accompanied by my brother-in-law, Colonel Dundas. He has already said he will leave me about nine and return just before twelve, when 'The Prophet' is supposed to be finished. I am compelled to visit, for the last time, a house in L—— Street, running from Leather Lane. The number is 39, and the persons who expect me are the most cruel and miserly people the world has ever known.

"I should have explained all to my husband before my marriage, but had not the courage. I have paid these people, who call me their grandchild, large sums of money. To-night I give my last bribe to secrecy, and the amount I carry with me is not a tithe of what they demand. Should they not accept that, I shall defy them, but I should like for the sake of avoiding publicity and dishonor to my husband's name, that you, and as many officers as you may desire to assist you should watch the place named or follow me from the Opera House to-night to L—— Street, to prevent violence.

"I am, yours truly,  
"MARIAM D——."

Going home, I "togged up" in such attire as would have puzzled my comrades not a little. Fur cap, velveteen coat, corduroy breeches and high-lows would alter the appearance of any man. In addition to this, I trained my naturally long, dark hair in the most approved "Noogate knocker" style and set off for L—— Street.

I had the honor of creating suspicion in the minds of two policemen whose "beats" branched off from this point. They watched me into the public bar, and presently one or two very dry habitues gathered around me in expectation of a "treat," for I had thrown a crown-piece down on ordering my drink.

After a good many drinks, to which they did excellent justice, I began to feel my pockets.

"Hullo!" cried one. "Stumbled, are we?"

"Broke as broke can be," I replied, looking wofully through the window at the leaden sky.

"Not a 'stiver' left!" I moaned, as I went over my pockets again. There was a general chorus of laments, and during this melancholy performance of irregular music, I surreptitiously transferred an old massive silver watch from my breast to my trousers pocket.

"D'ye want to part with it?" one asked, after a general quiet consultation.

"Of course I do," I said, "if I get a good price for it."

Tommy Wrench—the chief of the miserable

gang—hurried out, and shortly returned, crying: "Hand us over the 'ticker,' 'cull.' I'll bring you back the mopusses."

"What do you take me for—a 'mug?'" I said.

"Well, come along, then. I'll introduce you to the old 'un," and Mr. Wrench kindly took me down a neighboring street and into a second-hand clothes shop, from which we passed through a yard, a long entry, and then into another yard, and finally into the back kitchen of Mo' Guldenstein's house in L—— Street.

Everything had been removed ready for flight upon receiving the last "blackmail" from Mrs. Dundas.

I produced the watch, and with it a good impression. Mo' gave me three shillings and ninepence for a time-piece.

He said he was going to Birmingham next day to settle down. The cunning old fellow wanted me to have my fill of drink in his old cottage, and then have a sleep there until morning.

To this I would not consent, but agreed to come back about nine o'clock.

I returned after nine o'clock with more swag, and was welcomed graciously by the old man. Pretending to be very drowsy and drunk, I soon fell asleep in a miserable back room, which was only divided by a prepared canvas partition from the principal apartment.

At a quarter to ten o'clock Mrs. Dundas was admitted. The old people claimed her as their granddaughter—for Mrs. Guldenstein was now there. The lady repudiated the relationship, and offered them forty pounds as a last payment for peace and silence. They told her that her father had come home, and was now in Birmingham.

"I believe all you say to be false, but I offer you this and let us part."

"Would you like to see proof of what we say, my love?" whined old Mo', and drawing a discolored document from his coat pocket, he began to read:

"I, David Gouldstone, of Leadenhall Street, in the city of London, agree to adopt Mariam Guldenstein, the granddaughter of my cousin, Moses Guldenstein, on the following conditions, and proffering the following considerations."

"Great heavens, this cannot be true!" cried the beautiful woman, trying to seize the paper. The action caused her to drop her waterproof cloak and hood. The sight of a diamond star in her hair and necklet of the same precious stones proved too much for old Mo's covetousness.

Shouting, "Here, Mike—Zeke—Nathan—Deborah!" he rushed upon the defenseless lady, while some scoundrels I had seen upstairs joined in the attack.

Crashing through the slight partition, I was in time to prevent the lady being injured. At the same instant the front door was broken open by two fellow detectives, and in less than four minutes the whole gang were in irons.

Then it was that Colonel Dundas, who was suspicious of his sister-in-law's fidelity to his brother, accompanied by James Salter, appeared on the scene. I explained the situation briefly to both, and was not a little delighted when I heard the gallant colonel beg his sister-in-law's pardon for his cruel suspicions.



## PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, JULY 12, 1922

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## INTERESTING ARTICLES

## HUMAN HAIR AS A COMMODITY.

Forty bales of human hair is one item of a cargo reaching Seattle from China. Each 133-pound bale is worth more than \$400 here; our annual imports exceed \$500,000, and most of the hair goes into hair nets.

## MOTIONS OF THE EARTH.

The earth travels at the rate of 19 miles a second, and the distance it travels in its path around the sun is 560,000,000 miles. The equinoxes are due to the fact that the earth's poles are not perpendicular to the plane of its orbit, but on an angle, which accounts for its variety of climate on the earth, and for the varying lengths of day and night in the northern and southern hemispheres.

## THINK MOOSE ARE LEAVING MAINE

Are moose migrating from Maine, New Brunswick and other Northwestern parts of the Far Northwest? This question is heard, locally, on every hand, for in places throughout Alaska and the Yukon territory moose were seen for the first time this winter.

Twenty years there were few moose along the upper Yukon River, and an occasional one on the Laird. Last winter there were many reports of numbers of these forest monarchs having invaded the Pelly Lakes region and they have been seen recently on almost all the tributaries of the Yukon, whose headquarters are in the Alaska range. To-day the country along the Stikine and Tanana Rivers is the best moose regions in the North.

From where did all these fine moose come?

There is a theory here that the moose have been driven away from the Northeast by the continued banging of guns, year after year, and finding their way slowly through the Canadian wilderness, have crossed the mountains into the Cassiar country. The inhabitants there are widely scattered, leaving moose in full possession. The climate and food conditions are ideal for these big animals and they have thrived. From the Tanana River to tide water on Kenai Peninsula moose are rapidly increasing in numbers.

They are destined for a time to roam the newer

regions at will, for the miners have left, the Indians are long since decimated by disease, and it is too far for most hunting trips.

Moose live in low lying swamps and on river banks, eating willow twigs in winter, water reeds in summer. In mid-summer they dwell largely in water. Early in autumn the animals mate for winter and travel long distances, keeping within range of extensive willow swamps. The depth of snow determines how far they wander from the rivers and sloughs.

Old moose shed the big, shovel-like antlers early in January, younger ones weeks later. By the middle of May the new growth of horn protrudes less than an inch from the skull. In three months the development of the seventy-pound shovel, often six feet across, is entirely completed.

Alaskan moose are easily killed if the hunter is careful in stalking to keep to windward. The meat is excellent and natives preserve it by drying and smoking.

The average northern moose weighs from 1,000 to 1,500 pounds and stands eight to ten feet high at the shoulder. The leather from the skins is the best material known for moccasins. There is range and food in the Northwest for myriads of these big animals. Strict laws in Alaska now protect them.

## LAUGHS

He—if I was rich, darling, would you love me more than you do? She—Well, I might not love you any more; but I would look forward to our wedding day with a great deal more impatience than I do at present.

Spurgeon was once asked if the man who learned to play a cornet on Sunday would go to heaven. The great preacher's reply was characteristic. Said he: "I don't see why he should not, but"—after a pause—"I doubt whether the man next door will."

"Yes," said the eminent specialist to the tramp who had called upon him, "I will examine you carefully for ten dollars." "All right, Doc," said the tramp, resignedly, "do dat, an' if you find it I'll give you half."

"How is your boy getting along since he graduated?" inquired the Wood street man. The Smithfield street man sighed. "Poorly," said he. "That boy was too frivolous at college." "Wouldn't study, eh?" "Didn't go in for the right things. Went in for rowing instead of baseball. What chance has he to get on a fat salary roll?"

"Bang!" went the rifles at the manuevres. "Oo-oo," screamed the pretty girl—a nice, decorous, surprised little scream. She stepped backward into the surprised arms of a young man. "Oh," said she, blushing, "I was frightened by the rifles. I beg your pardon." "Not at all," said the young man. "Let's go over and watch the artillery."

Send us a one-cent stamp to cover postage, and we will mail you a copy of "Moving Picture Stories."



## PLUCK AND LUCK FROM ALL POINTS

27

### EXTERMINATE PRAIRIE DOGS

In Niobrara County, Wyoming, prairie dogs infest 200,000 acres of farm land; each dog means a loss of more than \$1 a year. The Biological Survey is co-operating with landowners to clean up these colonies of pests. In one such clean-up 99 per cent. of the animals were destroyed. Free bait is furnished for Government land, the County Commissioners gave financial help in the smaller sections.

### TWO 5-CENT STAMPS BRING 25,850 FRANCS

Philatelists recently paid 400,000 francs for stamps, most of them American Confederate States and local provisional issues, at the fourth instalment of the auction of the famous collection of Ferrari, de la Renotiere.

The collection was willed to the Post Museum at Berlin by Ferrari, who died in 1915, but it was sequestrated by the French Government, and is now being auctioned for reparations.

The highest price paid was 25,850 francs for a pair of Livingston, Ala., five-cent blues on a letter.

Nearly all the important issues sold went to Americans, principally to Warren Colson of Boston, who purchased back stamps he had bought for Ferrari, whose agent Colson was in the United States prior to the World War. These stamps have more than doubled in value.

Some of the stamps sold are the only known specimens extant. They included a pair of Petersburg (Va.) five-cent blacks, which fetched 11,162 francs. Fifty Mount Lebanon (La.) five-cent reds brought 15,862 francs, fifty New Smyrna (Fla.) ten-cent and one-cent blacks 11,750 francs, and a Beckman's Post, Charleston, S. C., 1860, two-cent on bluish paper 5,875 francs.

The collection, which up to the present time has been hardly half disposed of, already has fetched \$667,000. It represents fifty years of work by Ferrari, and is said to have cost him about \$1,000,000. Before the sale began the collection contained particularly complete groups of Confederate and local issues, most of which now have been sold to Americans, Arthur Hind, of Utica, N. Y., getting a majority of those not taken by Colson.

### MEXICO'S "TREE WITH HANDS"

Nature in the hot climates sometimes does extraordinary things. Few instances of the singular fact that nature, possibly for protection, repeats in flowers and plants the shape or appearance of other objects, are more astonishing than the tree with hands. The Aztecs in Mexico were so much impressed by it that they offered it most devout worship. To them the Macpalxochiquatl, as they called it—"the Hand Flower Tree"—with its blood red hands, was the earthly expression of a deity, dreadful and almighty. Its botanical title, if almost as long, is rather better sounding—the *Cheirostemon platanoides*.

The appearance of the flowers of this high and splendid tree is certainly like no other. From the center of each bloom there springs a columnar

stem which accurately represents a human arm and wrist, and this breaks into five stalks which are of a gold line and arranged after the manner of the human hand, with its finger and thumb. The very points of these vegetable fingers are curved like finger tips with overgrown nails. These parts of the Macpalxochiquatl's flowers are of a fairly large size and stand out in a menacing manner at some distance above the petals.

It is easy to understand, then, that this lofty and noble looking tree, of which there are but very few throughout Mexico and northern Central America, laden with flowers, waving aloft like a thousand blood red hands, was an object of worship among the superstitious and ignorant natives.

The *Cheirostemon platanoides* has its parallel, though, in one of the rarest of plants in Japan—the Five-Fingered Orange.

This dwarf tree, that is seldom more than five feet high and one of the most crooked, grows its fruit in the exact shape of the human hand, fingers, thumb and all. It is a partly opened hand and the hard pointed nails of the lean, yellow fruit-hand are the closest resemblance to the nails of an aristocratic Chinaman.

### SOMETHING ABOUT WASPS

The human view of wasps seems to lack a little in breadth. Because they are given to stinging us we fail to do justice to their virtues. One scientist who has given much study to the matter says that the main doctrines of the wasp are, "If any wasp will not work neither shall he eat"; and "Every wasp to labor according to his capacity and receive according to his needs, in a true community."

Division of labor, it is believed, goes a long way in the nest. Some of the workers seem to be specially employed as foragers and soldiers; others appear to be set off as nurses and guardians; while yet others are engaged as paper-makers and masons.

Wasps are at all times particularly fond of honey. Indeed they have a very sweet tooth for sugar in any form. Toward the end of summer, therefore, as bee keepers well know, they will force their way into beehives as open robbers and carry off by main force as much as they can gorge of their winged neighbors' honey.

The drones of the race, instead of being idle and luxurious creatures, are sober, industrious and well behaved members of the community. They clean the streets of their town with exemplary diligence; they act as public scavengers or sanitary officers. And they have their reward; for unlike the honey bee drones they live their allotted life in peace and quietness, till winter involves both them and their spinster sisters in one common calamity of death and destruction.

Send us a one-cent stamp to cover postage, and we will mail you a copy of "Mystery Magazine."



## GOOD READING

## GIANT GEYSERS.

Near the head of the Copper River in Alaska, in a very rough and broken country, above which rises the cone of the extinct volcano Mount Wrangell, there exists, according to the report of a Government officer, a nest of gigantic geysers which may even exceed those of the Yellowstone Valley in power and magnitude.

The officer was unable to approach near to the geysers, but he saw many in eruption from a distance, and he thinks that the steam from these geysers has given rise to erroneous reports from various sources that the crater of Mount Wrangell is still active. The surrounding country is so rough with its chasms, glaciers and lava beds that the officer is of the opinion that it would be almost impossible for explorers to reach the mountain.

## WIND CARRIED CHECK.

Clarence Sicks, residing four miles southwest of Silver Lake, Ind., recently found a check for \$140 in a field where he was working. The check had been given to George W. Ford, made payable to C. V. W. Adams at West Lebanon, Ind. The house occupied by Ford was wrecked by a wind-storm and the contents blown away. The check evidently was carried by the wind to the Kosciusko County farm, a distance of about 150 miles.

## FEWER WILD ANIMALS

A steady decrease in the number of wild animals that roam the plains, mountains and forests of Colorado is noted in a report made to the United States Forest Service here by Assistant District Forester John Hatton.

Despite the fact that many of the animals are protected by State game laws, elk are practically the only ones in the Colorado national forests that have shown an increase in the past year.

Predatory beasts and eagles, not the hunter's rifle, are responsible for the gradual wiping out of vast herds that once were found in the Centennial State, the report indicated.

According to the report there are only 183 wolves in the fifteen national forests of the State; 437 mountain lions are accounted for, while it is believed that only 34 grizzly bears remain in the region.

Beaver and brown bear are holding their own in numbers, but mountain sheep, deer and antelope are rapidly dwindling.

## DIVE FOR CHEST OF GOLD LOST 300 YEARS AGO

Gripped by the lure of sunken treasure, divers worked feverishly recently beneath the murky waters of the River Wye, Ontario, about an ancient chest sunk deep in the mud.

The chest contains, they hope, treasure lost nearly three centuries ago by Jesuit missionaries to Huronia. If it prove to be the Jesuit Fathers'

long-lost chest dropped overboard in 1650 while being conveyed by canoe to Fort Sainte Marie the order will be enriched by recovery of a set of solid gold altar candelabra presented to the mission by the Court of France and a quantity of French gold coin brought over to pay the troops who accompanied the missionaries to the New World.

Although tradition long has had it that the seventh box was buried beneath the waters of the Wye, no serious attempt was made to locate it until a few days ago. This search was stimulated by the recollection of a story told by a raftsmen some thirty years ago that he had touched the box when poling logs. The story was recently told to Diver Captain Carson and he interested Edward Jeffery of Midland, who had invented a peculiar magnetic divining rod, which had proved successful in showing ore and mineral deposits. The two rowed about the river until at length the needles of the divining rod showed a strong reaction to the influence of gold.

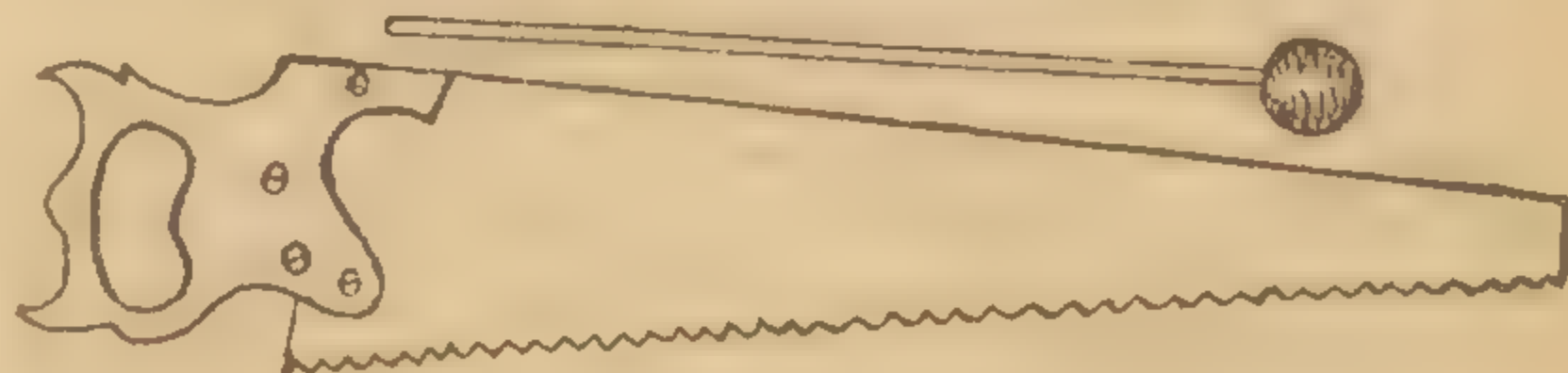
The place in the river was charted and subsequently the position and measurements of the chest were confirmed by steel rods. Its dimensions correspond exactly to the one lost by the Jesuit Fathers.

It is not only the recovery of priceless relics which is at stake, however, for Jeffery has staked on the quest the reputation of his magnetic instrument, which he claims can detect oil, gold, copper or iron within a distance of twenty-five miles.

The diviner is about four feet long with a barrel like a machine gun and a compartment at the end for the instruments, with holes for the arms which pass inside through this rubber tubing. The whole is covered with tarred cloth and a half-inch coat of insulating rubber. Jeffery says it is worked by the magnetic force of the person holding it, which is connected with the attraction exerted on the magnetic instrument inside by the oil or metal.

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## MUSICAL POWER IN NORTHWEST TIMBER

The familiar forest trees of the Northwest contain a marvelous musical power, for a big contract has just been received by local mills at Port Angeles, Wash., for two million feet of spruce planking, to be used for piano sounding boards. No substitute for this material, provided the wood is cut from large trees, has been found.

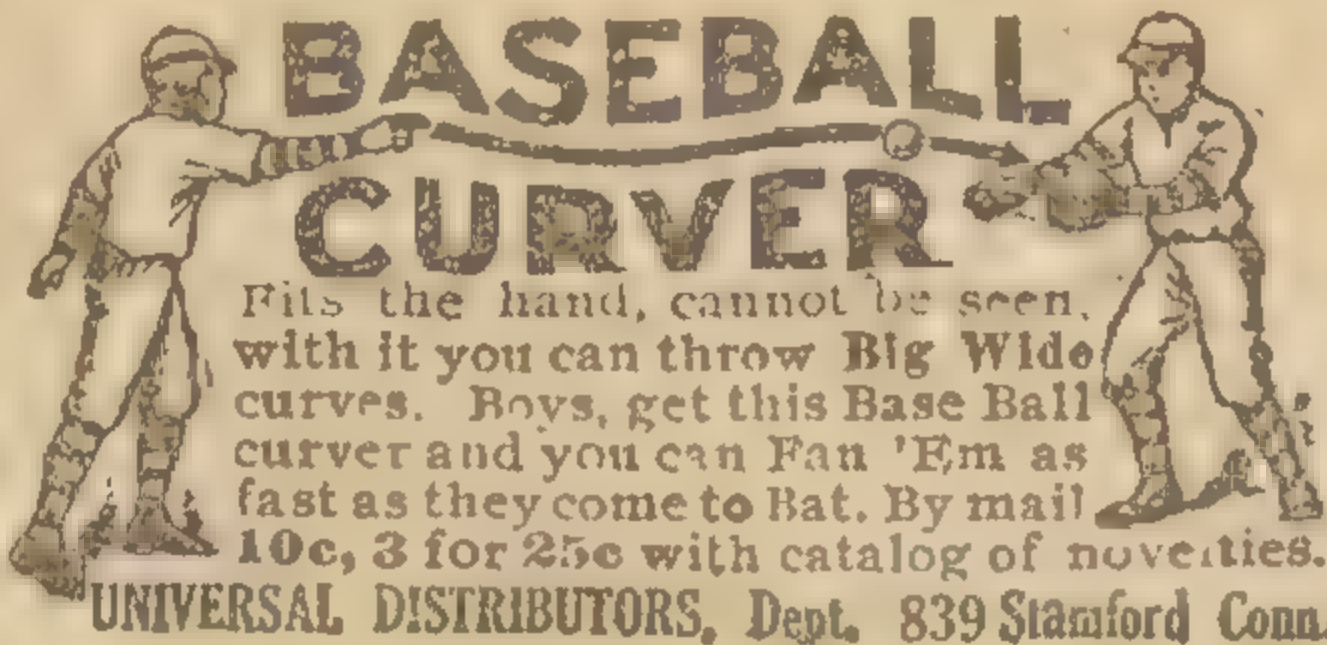
The quality of spruce wood for pianos and other music wood appliances is the long, straight, regular fibres of which these trees are composed. A microscopic examination reveals that the minute cells forming the wood are extremely long, and each is stretched like a taut string. When a piece of spruce is struck there is room between these cells for a tiny vibration, which rapidly extends through the whole section of timber. The cellular composition of spruce gives the rich, deep tones so pleasing to musicians.

The singing of a tightly stretched telegraph wire across an open field in autumn wind, induced a phonograph manufacturer to try cedar wood for the sounding box. As a result of this experiment, a million feet of red and white cedar is annually used.

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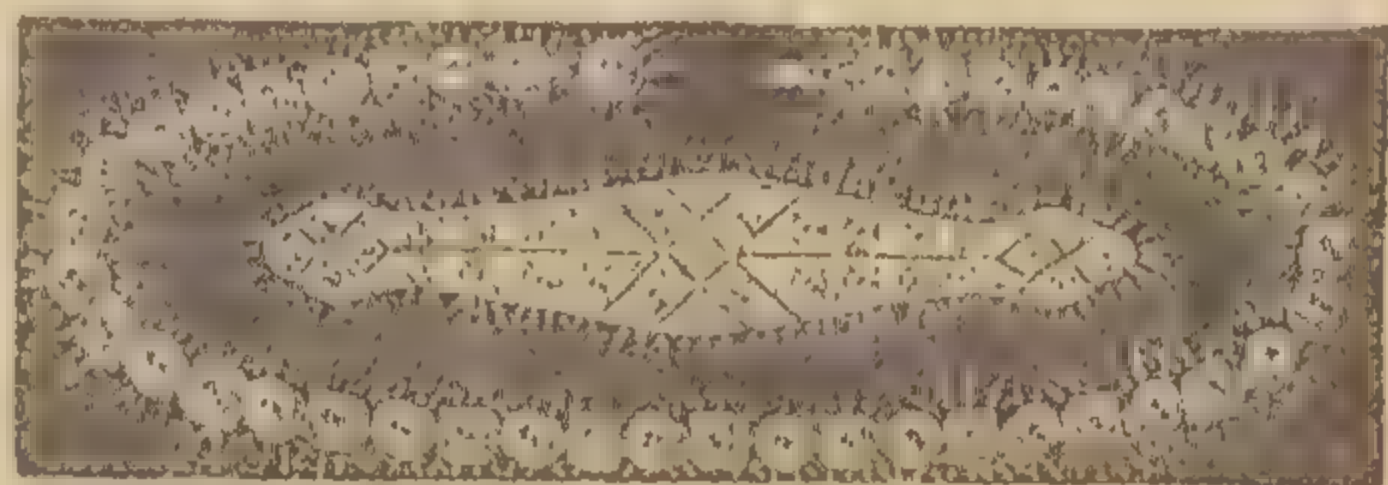
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by  
**Joseph Anderson**

I AM just the average man—twenty-eight years old, with a wife and a three-year-old youngster. I left school when I was fourteen. My parents didn't want me to do it, but I thought I knew more than they did.

I can see my father now, standing before me, pleading, threatening, coaxing me to keep on with my schooling. With tears in his eyes he told me how he had been a failure all his life because of lack of education—that the untrained man is always forced to work for a small salary—that he had hoped, yes, and prayed, that I would be a more successful man than he was.

But no! My mind was made up. I had been offered a job at nine dollars a week and I was going to take it.

That nine dollars looked awfully big to me. I didn't realize then, nor for years afterward, that I was being paid only for the work of my hands. My brain didn't count.

THEN one day, glancing through a magazine, I came across the story of a man just like myself. He, too, had left school when he was fourteen years of age, and had worked for years at a small salary. But he was ambitious. He decided that he would get out of the rut by training himself to become expert in some line of work.

So he got in touch with the International Correspondence Schools at Scranton and started to study in his spare time at home. It was the turn in the road for him—the beginning of his success.

Most stories like that tell of the presidents of great institutions who are earning \$25,000 and \$50,000 a year. Those stories frighten me. I don't think I could ever earn that much. But this story told of a man who, through spare time study, lifted himself from \$25 to \$75 a week. It made an impression on me because it talked in terms I could understand. It seemed reasonable to suppose that I could do as well.

I tell you it didn't take me long that time to mark and send in that familiar coupon. Information regarding the Course I had marked came back by return mail. I found it wasn't too late to make up the education I had denied myself as a boy.

I was surprised to find out how fascinating a home-study course could be. The I. C. S. worked with me every hour I had to spare. I felt myself growing. I knew there was a bigger job waiting for me somewhere.

Four months after I enrolled my employer came to me and told me that he always gave preference to men who studied their jobs—and that my next



salary envelope would show how much he thought of the improvement in my work.

Today, my salary is more than 300% greater than it was when I began my studies. That increase has meant a better home and all the luxuries that make life worth while.

What I have done, you can do. For I am just an average man. I had no more education to begin with than you have—perhaps not as much. The only difference is a matter of training.

TO every man who is earning less than \$75 a week, I say simply this:—*Find out what the I. C. S. can do for you!*

It will take only a minute of your time to mark and mail the coupon. But that one simple act may change your whole life.

If I hadn't taken that first step four years ago I wouldn't be writing this message to you today! No, and I wouldn't be earning anywhere near \$75 a week, either!

----- TEAR OUT HERE -----  
INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS  
BOX 4493 SCRANTON, PA.

Without cost or obligation please explain how I can qualify for the position, or in the subject before which I have marked an X:

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Name.....

Street..... 1-10-22

City..... State.....

Occupation.....

Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada.



## DISCOURAGED ABOUT WILD TURKEYS

Jack Winslow, Game Warden for the Grays Harbor District, Washington, is discouraged over the prospect of wild turkeys for this State.

One small flock released last summer, near Oakville, during the past month has found refuge at the ranch of J. Bartell, and each night roost beside his domestic fowls. Three meals per day appeal to them more than the wild, free life of the upland.

Another large flock was liberated in the Northern part of the State during the early fall. There evidently was a family row, for the hens went Southwest and were recently located on a ranch near Sedro Wooley. The gobblers went straight North and have been reported near the city limits of Bellingham, where they forage in the feed lots of a hog raiser.

Naturalists believe the suitable food for which the wild turkeys seek is not readily found in the Northwest woods and they have been forced by hunger to enter the domestic folds.

The eggs from which these birds were hatched came from the mountains of Northern Mexico.

## 8 000 Mile Cord Tires



Brand new, absolutely first cord tires. Guaranteed 8,000 miles and adjusted at the list price on that guarantee. The prices below include a brand new Tube.

30x3	\$ 9.50	32x4	\$16.10	33x4 1/2	\$22.15
30x3 1/2	11.25	33x4	17.00	34x4 1/2	23.20
32x3 1/2	13.50	34x4	18.60	35x4 1/2	24.05
31x4	14.10	32x4 1/2	21.10	35x5	26.50

Send no money. Just write today and tell us the size of your tires and the number you want. Tires will be shipped C. O. D. with section unwrapped for inspection. All tires have non-skid tread.

CHARLES TIRE CORP. Dept. 746 2824 Wabash Avenue, Chicago

## New Hair Growth After BALDNESS

On legal affidavit, John Hart Brittain, business man, certified to this: "My head at the top and back was absolutely bald. The scalp was shiny. An expert said that he thought the hair roots were extinct, and there was no hope of my ever having a new hair growth. Yet now, at an age over 66, I have a luxuriant growth of soft, strong, lustrous hair! No trace of baldness. The pictures shown here are from my photographs." Mr. Brittain certified further:

### INDIAN'S SECRET OF HAIR GROWTH

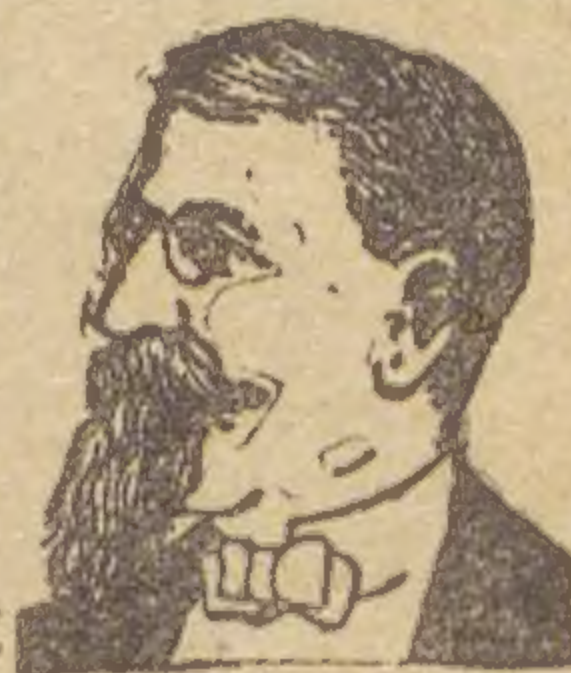
"At a time when I had become discouraged at trying various hair lotions, tonics, specialists' treatments, etc., I came across, in my travels, a Cherokee Indian 'medicine man' who had an elixir that he asseverated would grow my hair. Although I had but little faith, I gave it a trial. To my amazement a light fuzz soon appeared. It developed, day by day, into a healthy growth, and ere long my hair was as prolific as in my youthful days.

That I was astonished and happy is expressing my state of mind mildly. Obviously, the hair roots had not been dead, but were dormant in the scalp, awaiting the fertilizing potency of the mysterious pomade. I negotiated for and came into possession of the principle for preparing this mysterious elixir, now called Kotalko, and later had the recipe put into practical form by a chemist.

That my own hair growth was permanent has been amply proved."



Photo when bald.



After hair growth

## How YOU May Grow YOUR Hair

It has been proved in very many cases that hair roots did not die even when the hair fell out through dandruff, fever, alopecia areata or certain other hair or scalp disorders. Miss A. D. Otto reports: "About 8 years ago my hair began to fall out until my scalp in spots was almost entirely bald. I used everything that was recommended but was always disappointed until at last I came across Kotalko. My bald spots are being covered now; the growth is already about three inches." G. W. Mitchell reports: "I had spots completely bald, over which hair is now growing since I used Kotalko." Mrs. Matilda Maxwell reports: "The whole front of my head was as bald

as the palm of my hand for about 15 years. Since using Kotalko, hair is growing all over the place that was bald." Many more splendid, convincing reports from satisfied users.

### KOTALKO

FOR FALLING HAIR  
BALDNESS, DANDRUFF

For Sale at all  
Busy Drug Stores



contains GENUINE BEAR OIL and other potent ingredients. No alcohol, no shampoo; but a hair elixir of wonderful efficacy. All ingredients are safe and harmless, even for a child's scalp and hair. Positively KOTALKO is one delightfully reliable hair preparation that succeeds upon genuine merit. Buy a box of KOTALKO at the drug store. Or ask for Kotalko at the toilet goods or drug counter of any large department store. Remember the name. Accept nothing else as "just as good." \$800.00 GUARANTEE. Or if you send 10 cents (silver or stamps), you will receive a PROOF BOX of Kotalko with BROCHURE, postpaid. Determine NOW to eliminate DANDRUFF, to treat BALDNESS, to STOP HAIR FROM FALLING. Get a box of guaranteed KOTALKO, apply once or twice daily; watch in your mirror. For PROOF BOX (10 cents, none otherwise) write to



Kotalko is wonderful  
for women's hair.

KOTALKO OFFICES, BA-375, Station X, New York



## PLUCK AND LUCK

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